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FROM

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“But to one of these questions her mirror answered no.”
(See page 63)

THE GRAPPLE

A Story of the Illinois Coal Region ; Being the History of a Man Who, Having Himself Come up from the Miner's Pick, Having the Profoundest Sympathy for the Men, the Union, and All It Stands For, and Has Done for Labour, yet Single-handed and Alone, Successfully Withstood the Encroachments of the Mine Workers' Union, and the Unjust Demands of Its Leaders.

By

Grace MacGowan Cooke

Author of "The Last Word," "Return," etc.

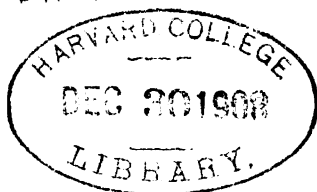
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ARTHUR W. BROWN



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PREFACE

THERE are two courses open to the writer of to-day who loves to chronicle a good, rousing fight: he may take to the pages of history and the swash-buckling romance, or he may study the economic warfare of our own day, which has its equivalent for every detail of that earlier strife.

The author of "The Grapple" has tried her hand at the writing of historical fiction. In discussing some literary material with a young friend who wished to have her opinion upon it, the story which follows made itself. Mr. Vond Reed, who has been with the army in Porto Rico, and writes military stories, had also served three years with a wing of the big industrial army which fights its war in the coal district of a Middle Western State. Employed in the clerical department, his attention was continually attracted by the humourous, pathetic, and tragic aspects of existence among the men who delve in the dark and cold that others may sit warm in the light.

Whatever feature of that life was under discus-

PREFACE

sion, we usually came around to a certain dauntless mine owner who did all that Mark Strong does in the course of this story,—and perhaps a little more. It was also owing to Mr. Reed's sharp sense of humour that the goat would butt his way into the narrative, and the folding bed gyrate for the diversion of such as may read these pages.

So, along with this hearty acknowledgment of the obligation which "The Grapple" owes to Vond Reed, as a playing if not a working partner in its construction, his practical and personal information upon the subject permits me to offer my readers the satisfactory assurance that Mark Strong is yet successful, the Captain still telling funny stories, and Iroquois occupying the exact spot upon the map — which has a dot with another name to it! If, recently, that district has been rent by another coal miners' war which has usurped a fairly large space in the newspapers, it was not our war, and does not concern us. Mark Strong's dead-line still holds, and there is peace within it.

GRACE MACGOWAN COOKE.

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THE GRAPPLE

CHAPTER I.

A BAR OF LIGHT

It was thrown upon the deep, wet darkness of the street, an oblong of muddy illumination, shining out from the front window of Gus Yount's saloon. An airy, unwall'd stage, this, upon which the passing, repassing, meeting faces and figures for one little moment played their parts.

Within the saloon itself, there was the usual medley of sounds and movements. From the pool-room in the rear came the click of balls, the thumping of cues upon the floor, punctuated from time to time with an oath as a player missed some easy shot. In the front room, whence the light shone, there was the rattle of glasses, the shuffling of feet, loud voices and louder laughter; and the air

was thick with tobacco smoke from stubby pipes and cigars of doubtful authenticity.

Yount's place was the unofficial headquarters of the Union; and above was the Union hall itself. One could read, as upon a barometer, the condition of the Union's affairs, by bending a sympathetic ear to the dominant note any evening at Gus Yount's. And by that same token the intelligent listener, upon this gusty black night in the early summer of 1900, might have guessed that the Union had things on its mind.

Apart from the general crowd, there was a small group drawn together at a table which stood not far from the window through which shone the oblong of light. They were shut off from the bar and pool-room by a small partition that extended halfway to the ceiling. This group, which consisted of four men and a boy apparently about seventeen, spoke together with lowered voices and heads bent far forward over the table. Plainly some point was definitely settled among the five; and now the young fellow rose and strolled toward the front door, while two of the four men left the table and crouched upon their knees at the window, bending so low that no shadow of their heads fell upon the oblong of light.

The young fellow, standing at the door, kept his

eyes fixed upon these two. His right hand, behind his back, hid something underneath his short coat.

Occasionally the swing door was pushed inward — or outward — by an entering or emerging figure. At these times the boy would draw back and look away unconcernedly.

When the door swung open, the increased light in the street showed the dim outlines of a man who lounged beside the window-frame, out of which shone the bar of light. The figure, dimly conjectured, was tall; and when this glimmer from the open door touched hat, and shoulder, and side, one might have perceived that this was an elderly man, who smoked an ancient pipe. The thing which made his lounging beside Yount's window-frame to-night singular was, that there was a drizzling rain, and everybody not already within doors was hurrying with all speed to be there.

Across the bar of light a dissatisfied cat skulked. Chilled, disconsolate, avoiding the mud and tiny puddles with feline distaste, she made her transit — and as the creeping small figure came within the light, the two men kneeling inside the window peered forth eagerly.

The spark in the old pipe glowed dully; a gush of smoke rose from it and drifted vaguely within the lighted space. At the same moment there was

a shuffle of quick footsteps, and a child, a shambling boy of ten, appeared against the light; he was carrying a bucket of beer, and was muttering and sniffing as he went, knuckling his eyes with his free hand, then shaking his head doggedly from side to side. A little behind him followed a younger child, a girl, who also cried, but mutely, so that one only became aware of her grief when the little pinched face had its moment in the bar of light.

The man in the shadow straightened up, leaned forward, and silently proffered a small coin, which the child took also in amazed silence, and, drying the tears, moved on.

Next there limped across the light a stray dog, who wagged his stump tail and sniffed appealingly around the man's ankles. A softly dropped hand encouraged these deprecating doggish advances. A man who is not afraid of being bitten by a strange cur is apt to deserve a whole skin.

What the watchers inside next saw was a portly woman in a checked gingham wrapper, with a market-basket upon her arm. After her the lighted space was long vacant; the gusty, black wind, which was dancing uncertainly beneath a night sky, drove the fine rain in under the ragged awning, filling the place with discomfort.

Every figure — were it man, woman, cat, dog, or

child — which had appeared within the bar of light, had for an instant silenced the tense murmuring voices at that little table inside the window; the two men upon their knees had bent forward eagerly; the young fellow at the swing door had raised a hand to its frame, his eyes fixed upon the kneeling men. Then, as each creature passed on its way, low excited murmurs had burst forth afresh from that group, with carefully guarded violence; the young fellow at the door had dropped again into a waiting posture, still watching the men at the window.

After the woman in the gingham wrapper had gone by, one of the kneeling men had turned to the other, questioning, half-angrily:

“Shoot! How’s he going to shoot — or anything else — when Bob knocks him senseless the first clatter out of the box?”

A quieter tone answered the question; it came from one of the men at the table back of them; yet it was not so quiet but that the lounging man outside heard every word.

“His gun is in the little grip he carries. The thing opens of itself — opens with a spring — the minute he sets it down or drops it; and there’s his gun right to his hand. He can grab it quicker than any move you ever see made — and he’s lightning on the trigger.”

"An' he don't never need but one," added the other man at the table; "'cause that one he carries is a magazine gun — shoots ten shots. All you've got to do is to press the trigger, and she keeps on shootin' till you turn 'er loose."

"Yes, I know; one of them things that's plenty easy to start, but you've got to throw it in the crick to get it stopped," murmured one of the men kneeling at the window.

"Hell! guns!" grunted the first speaker; but he uttered the words too loud, for his companion interrupted in a sharp whisper:

"Hsh-h-h-h! You needn't beller it to the whole street!"

The young fellow who had been standing at the door all along edged over toward his companions.

"What's he goin' to know 'bout guns?" he broke in, fiercely. "What's a gun goin' to do fer him — when he's knocked half-acrost the street?"

"Well, you'll have to be damn swift about it," returned the man who had last spoken. "And we'll have to get hold of him quick after he's down. If we're more'n two seconds doin' it, the Union will have some funerals on its hands."

"Then it's your business not to give him the two seconds when he's down," muttered the boy. "All

I want of you fellows is to run in quick when I've got him down, and grab him."

One of the kneeling men at the window — the one who had not been speaking — turned sharply upon the lad now.

"You better get back to that door, Bob," he whispered, waving an impatient finger, "or you'll miss the whole thing."

Thus admonished, the boy once more returned to the door.

Now for some time the voices in the saloon and from the pool-room rose and fell. In the street no creature strayed upon the little stage of the lighted space. Within the window there was heavy breathing and nervous, restless movements. The man outside had noiselessly knocked the tobacco from his pipe against the palm of his hand, and put it in his pocket. Now he also stood in an attitude of tense expectancy. Finally, in perfect silence, and with evident precaution, he drew himself away from the wall against which he had been leaning. There was about him a definite air of going somewhere.

But, as though his movement had been a signal, a quick, light step approached; the heavy breathing inside grew louder, and was punctuated by one or two hissing whispers. Suddenly the upper part of a man's figure was projected upon the bar of light;

a slight man, carelessly dressed, with a soft hat turned back from a pleasant face, whose only distinguishing mark was a pair of wonderfully piercing, penetrating gray eyes.

The tall form in the shadow started forward without a sound — but too late. The man whose face had so suddenly leaped into life out of the surrounding blackness was the one who had been stayed for. Here, at last, was the protagonist. Between his appearance and what followed, there was scarce time to draw a breath. The faces of the two kneeling men were pressed close against the pane. Their eyes met; there was an affirmative nod; then the one nearest the door raised his hand, and shook it sharply toward the young fellow they called Bob.

The swing door moved outward with a sudden impulse. Within the aperture an arm was lifted, and a beer bottle — hurled with wonderful precision, considering the nature of the shot — struck the newcomer while yet his face was within the bar of light, with such lightning quickness had all been done.

He went down as an ox is felled with the pole-axe. The little grip fell from his nerveless hand, rolled wide, nor stopped until it had dropped off the curb into the street.

There was a sudden crash of overturned chairs

and hurrying feet, as the boy's voice, shrill with nervousness, cried out:

"Come on, quick! I've got him!"

The door swung wide, discovering within the doorway a compact body of men.

"Keep together! Keep together!" some one admonished, in a deep, guttural tone.

"Out of my place — the lot of you!" cried old Yount's voice. (Gus plainly meant to clear his skirts, in a more or less conventional manner. And in the broad avenue of light from the open door five men came pell-mell, thrust on by the angry saloon-keeper. With snarls like nothing human, they made for the prostrate and motionless form.

They were almost within arm's reach of him when they pulled up short, those in the lead recoiling so violently that they trod upon their friends in the rear. An instant they remained, nonplussed. For the figure in the shadow had come out, and now stood over the victim on the sidewalk.

The five saw him plainly, a tall, old man, in a big, flapping overcoat; his slouched hat dripped down over his ears (one can use no better word) like rain-soaked eaves. A pair of curious light eyes looked out from under bushy brows at the newcomers, and a peculiar drawling voice inquired:

"D' you boys want anything?"

The silence was absolute.

"Any of you lost a small article, 'bout the size of a beer bottle, for instance?"

He was one man, and they were five. But they cowered together, drew back, and their faces were pale, their lips made no sound.

The old fellow stopped and raised the unconscious figure, dexterously loosing tie and collar, passing his hand over brow and temple where the blow had fallen. He recognized that the hurt was not serious, that the man was but stunned. When he glanced up again, no living soul was in sight.

A moment later he lifted his head with the intention of shouting for help, when, without any warning sound of footsteps, a woman's face suddenly appeared beside him in the area of light. She touched him on the arm, eagerly yet timidly, and inquired, in a deep, rich, shaken voice:

"Is — is he — dead, Captain McClintock?"

The old man looked keenly in her eyes.

"No, Mrs. Llewellyn," he answered, quietly; "I don't think he's bad hurt at all."

At the first sound of the woman's voice the injured man had moved and shivered within the hands that supported him; the eyelids twitched and quivered — but did not open.

"Did you — did you see who — what did you see?" she now faltered.

"I didn't rightly see anything but a beer bottle fly out of that door and take Mr. Strong side of the head. What I seen was a beer bottle," continued the old man, argumentatively. ~"But yet, you know beer bottles can't take wings to themselves in that fashion. There must have been a man to throw it."

"But you didn't see who — nor after — Oh —"

She ended with a cry that was almost a shriek, and, drawing her shawl convulsively around her shoulders, disappeared into the darkness.

The injured man opened his eyes and sat up. "Give me a hand, Cap," he said, quietly. "I guess I can stand."

He rose, groped for and reclaimed the small valise, then lifted his fingers to his head.

"It's just a little cut," he commented, reflectively. "That bottle must have struck the edge of the door, or slipped in the fellow's hand. Thank you, Captain; good-night. I'm a little shaky on my pins, but I guess I'll do."

He was stepping quietly into the dark when the man he had called Captain laid a detaining hand on his shoulder.

"I'm going your way," he said, remonstrantly,

"and I reckon you won't object to my walking alongside of you. It looks plumb foolish for you to be plugging around in the dark this way, after what's just happened."

They had drawn back into the square of light now, and the smaller man looked up with a quick smile, which made his face very pleasant.

"It wasn't being in the dark that made the trouble," he said. "It seems to have been passing across this light here, where I was recognized. Jeff didn't come down to the office with the buggy, and I was going up to the livery-stable to see what was the matter with him."

"Gosh!" said the tall old man, shaking his big shoulders. "If I had as much pluck to the ounce as you've got, what a scrapper I'd be!"

And the two laughed together in the gusty black night, as they set off in a companionship which was to be longer than either of them guessed.

CHAPTER II.

MARK STRONG

It was a very plain office; everything in it was strictly for use, and, having been used much, showed the marks thereof. The man behind the desk was a slender little fellow, who sat with a studious droop. Afoot, you would have found that he had an indolent, halting gait that was almost like a limp. That, when he was indifferent. Those who had seen him in action knew, however, that he was as quick on his feet as a cat, and as dexterous and alert as one.

The face was unremarkable except for its eyes. Gray, large-pupiled, with a bullet-like directness of gaze intolerable to an opponent, these eyes were overhung by a slight fulness at the corners beneath the brows, which gave a slanting, almost plaintive line; one that is, curiously enough, to be found in the faces of many inveterate fighters when they fight upon the mental plane. The terrible gray eye of Bismarck furnishes an example of this. The

man wore glasses, for he was near-sighted; and even when these were off, his eyes were often filmed and introspective, as is the habit of persons with a mighty power of concentration. But let something arouse him, and the quick, expanding pupils of those eyes made them suddenly black — points of black fire they seemed, and the man had yet to be found who could “look down” their steady gaze.

His voice was low, his speech scanty and infrequent. You would have said that he was often at a loss for a word, or dreamily indifferent to making his meaning clear. But challenge him, let him face an antagonist, and he spoke as one of old, with the gift of tongues.

The story is still told in and about Iroquois of a meeting at the town hall, to hear a labour agitator, Robert Emmet Patterson, speak. Patterson was always an injudicious man; and he said some things which made the minority, who had wanted to invite the mine owners to be present, glad they had refrained from doing so. After the speaking came the general hand-shaking and the introducing of the miners to Mr. Patterson.

“’Twas a grand speech — a grand speech,” said the big Irishman Cassiday, shaking Patterson’s hand. “I only wish Mark Strong could ‘a’ heard it.”

It was just at the opening of Mark Strong's career as a mine owner. He had organized the company, arranged the purchase of nearly a thousand acres of land, and had the Twin Brothers in profitable operation. There are two words to be said as to the advantage a man has in ruling that class from which himself sprung. Strong met envy and jealousy, as well as a feeling of good-fellowship among the men who knew he had risen, by way of self-education, from the pick and shovel. Mostly the old men were with him and "wished their sons might do as well." Often the young men, who felt that they were not progressing toward any such goal, opposed him bitterly.

"You wish Mark Strong could 'a' been here to listen to Bert Patterson? Well, I don't," chimed in a young check-weighman. "It isn't the likes of that that'll turn Mark Strong. He thinks he knows it all. He's got the big head. And he's got to go on — damn him — till he learns better."

Talley Self, Gord Bosang, and some other young fellows near at hand, applauded the check-weighman, and Strunk added:

"Huh! Mark Strong wouldn't last longer in this meeting than a snowbank in hell."

"Aw, come off!" remonstrated the big Irishman who had first spoken. "You kids make me tired."

This ain't no Clan-na-gael meetin' — the little boss would be as safe here as settin' in his own parlour."

There was a bellow of laughter from the older men.

"Well, you notice he don't think so," came the sneer from Strunk.

"You'll notice he keeps away," added Self. "He ain't a-wanting to stand up ag'in Robert Emmet Patterson in argyment."

These were the jeers that came from various portions of the room. Suddenly there was a little disturbance at the front of the platform, as the surface of a fluid is disturbed when it reaches the boiling point and begins to throw up bubbles. Out of the centre of this stir shot a small man, who leaped upon the platform without appearing to lay hand on it. He was facing his audience as he went up, and he was talking as he lit. It was Mark Strong. He dropped his head and looked at his auditors from under lowered brows.

"Now I've got a mine," he began; "the Twin Brothers. Some say it got its name from the two old shafts that used to be out there. Some say the original grant of the main tract was made to a couple of men, twin brothers. I don't know. To me the name has always stood for the two powers that work in a mine — capital and labour. Twin

brothers they are — the dollar and the sweat that earns the dollar — born at one birth, of one mother, heirs to one destiny. God send that in this mine the twin brothers learn to work in harmony together, each doing his part.

“This question is as big as the world; capital without labour is sterile. Look at the Oriental Jew, forced to keep his wealth in the form of money and jewels. What do these produce for the body politic, and his fellow men? Nothing. They fester — they form sores — they breed disease, in a financial sense. They are in a shape that a man may be murdered for their possession; they are ready to be lent to the spendthrift who will make ill use of them. Look at such a fellow; he may have thousands of dollars carried around on his wife’s head and neck and fingers, but he’s poorer than any one of you. He lives in a filthy hole; he eats what your dogs wouldn’t touch; and some day his wife’s knocked on the head in a dark alley for her jewels; and what he called wealth ends in poverty and crime. Capital must be married to labour before its product is what this modern, civilized world needs.

“Labour, on the other hand, can produce what the individual requires, as the farmer raises meat and bread, and the wool and cotton that his wife

spins for coarse clothing. But if labour wants to produce better things, to develop and become industrially important to the world, it must be married to capital; its blind productiveness must be systematized, its course directed. Labour is represented by many individuals, and its rewards are subdivided until they are proportionately small. Capital is represented by fewer individuals, — sometimes by one, — and the rewards, being less divided, become proportionately greater. Yet, if the man who pays the bills stands to make more, he also carries upon his shoulders a responsibility which the others do not wish to assume. He is the man who has dared, who has come to the front in the industrial battle; he wears the shoulder-straps and the gay uniform — and at him all his adversaries point their Gatling guns.

“It’s a hard thing for him when the men in his own ranks are ready to fight him, too.

“You don’t fight me? You don’t want to run the Twin Brothers?” In answer to a protest from the back of the hall. “Well, the Local keeps a list of Union men who want to work in my mine. When there is a vacancy the committee goes to my pit-boss and tells him where he can find a man for the place — and he’d better find that man where they tell him to look. The Twin Brothers has never

been a Union mine. But from the first there have been more Union than non-Union men in the mine, and you are always expecting to make your point, to make of it a Union mine, and get the privilege of telling my non-Union men that they can join the Local or quit work. That's what you've been reasoning with me about; sending this one and that to me; getting Van Dorn to plead; threatening, begging, and getting always the same answer.

"The Union's a good thing. I give you full swing to push the Union in the Twin Brothers. I hope you'll have a good Local. I don't think there's anything that will do you men more good than a flourishing branch of the Union. It stands for many good things; but *it can't run the Twin Brothers*. No. Never. I'll give you a hall; I'd keep my membership in your association if your regulations permitted me to. I'll coöperate with you in any good work you take up, — but the Union will never help me to run my mine. The Union can have no control of its workings. Not while my head's hot. When I can't run my own business I'll be dead."

The quiet, emphatic voice ceased suddenly, and Strong walked out amid a respectful silence. And that speech is yet referred to in Iroquois, when new-

comers find the owner of the Twin Brothers "a say-nothing chap."

Now, an old man sauntered into the office and looked questioningly down at the slender figure behind the desk.

"Feelin' kinder seedy this mornin'?" he inquired, genially; and one recognized the tones of last night's rescuer.

"No. Thanks to you, Captain, I think I'm all right, except this," raising a forefinger to a strip of plaster across his temple beneath the gold rim of his glasses, which showed where the beer bottle from Yount's saloon had broken the skin.

"Guess that didn't have anything to do with the Union," said the Captain, finally. "A lot of fool boys was talking by the window as I passed, and I heard your name. I stopped a minute — because Yount's is a sort of Union headquarters, and I'm like the rest of folks, I don't think you ought to go on foot past such a place as that at night, when there's any trouble with the men."

"And yet you don't think this was the Union?" observed Strong, smilingly.

"It was one boy," asserted the old man. "That boy belongs to the Local, and he works in your mine, and he'd persuaded four or five of the other

fellows to stand in with him—but I have one or two good reasons for thinking it was a personal matter.”

“Don’t tell them to me,” hastened Strong, putting up an impulsive hand as though to ward off a blow. “I—I think I can guess who it was, and why it was.”

The Captain regarded him for some time in silence. Finally,—

“I know just as much or just as little about this business as you want me to, Mr. Strong,” he said. “I didn’t want to meddle, but to do some good. Many a fool man’s in the penitentiary because his tongue was too long.” And he chuckled whimsically.

Strong reached a hand across the table.

“Shake hands on it,” he said; and the Captain clasped the slender member in his great paw, and shook it heartily. “The Union has a broad back—it’ll have to shoulder that beer bottle.” He paused for a moment. “Captain McClintock, I need a man like you in my employ. My farm boss is going to leave at the end of the month—he has Union principles—how would you like the position?”

The large holdings of mine owners in the middle West are farmed by tenants, or, more rarely, by the

company itself. A farm boss's duties are to see that the rents (generally in the shape of tithes) are collected, or he attends to the administration on the farms that the company itself may be operating.

"It would hit me just about right," agreed the Captain.

And so the bargain was struck. As the old man went out he met the president of the Local Branch of the United Mine Workers. Strong was awaiting the visit of a committee from this organization; and the president had come in a few minutes before the appointed hour. He and his employer had worked together in the mines as boys, and a kindly, though undemonstrative, friendship subsisted between them.

A tall, well-built Pennsylvania Dutchman was Joe Ackerman, with the slow wits, the sterling honesty, and the crude simplicity which often characterize his kind. He came to-day for the particular purpose of labouring privately with his employer, and of explaining to Strong that Van Dorn, superintendent and general manager as well as practical owner of the Gloriana, was an example of what may be done by acceding to the demands of the Union.

"But, Mr. Strong," he argued, "you know that in the Gloriana the Union has it all its own way.

Mr. Van Dorn just sends for the committee when there's any kick coming, and talks it over like one of 'em."

Strong looked the big, simple man up and down, with pity.

"I wonder at you, Joe," he said, finally. "I know a little soft soap from a fellow like that makes things slide easy; but I really wonder at you. *He* sends for the Union — *he's* got the working man's wrongs at heart — *he's* willing to talk to your committee! I wonder at you."

Ackerman scratched his head, and looked his employer and one-time associate in the eye frankly; he was an honest man, if a rather slow one.

"I know what you mean, Mark," he said, in a lower tone. "I've got the same feeling, too, about Van Dorn, and it ain't just because his hands is so white, and his pants always creased down the front as if they'd just come off the shelf in the store. Yet you're bound to admit the facts; you can't deny that he lets the Union run his mine."

"Because he's too flabby to run it himself. Because he doesn't know enough — he doesn't know how. And how does the Union run it, Joe? The Gloriana has been losing money — Oh, I didn't blame that on the Union — it was you that said the Union was running the mine. I say Van Dorn's

mine doesn't pay because Van Dorn doesn't know his business. Is the Union in that business? Does it know that business?"

Ackerman shook his head sheepishly.

"Well, then, the man who keeps the Union where it belongs — as I intend to — pays its men good wages, gives them a safe, dry mine to work in, adds every reasonable privilege they ask for — and makes money for himself and them — is a better friend to the Union than Van Dorn.

"Tell the truth, Joey," he said, leaning suddenly forward with a smile. "Wouldn't the men leave Van Dorn to come to me to-morrow, if they thought they could get in here? Wouldn't they rather work for me, ten to one, than stay with him? Who makes the most money, the men in the Gloriana, or the men in the Twin Brothers? Don't quote Van Dorn to me, Joe," Strong frowned, impatiently. "You'll see the day you'll be sorry you ever trusted his friendliness to the Union."

Ackerman's stubborn "Dutch" was aroused. "But I tell you Van Dorn is a reasonable man," he persisted, "and a good friend to the Union. He —"

"Van Dorn?" broke in Strong. "Joe, he despises the Union — and all working men — as the dirt under his feet! The dirt that it is necessary to

have there, so that he can walk on it. You've picked out a bad illustration, Joe; Van Dorn isn't even an American."

"W'y, you must be out of your head, Mark! 'Course he's an American, — w'y, he was born right here in —"

"Yes, I know where he was born; but that was the last of his Americanism. His mother took him abroad when he was a chunk of a boy — took him and his sister — and they've been abroad ever since, till they came back here last year, after Van Dorn had married the Gloriana. There isn't an American thought in their heads. They're as French as the Frenchest — just as their mother wanted them to be. Lord, I wish you could hear your friend Van Dorn talk to me a little! It's equal to that devil, what's-his-name, over there in France before their revolution. The man that said, 'If the people are hungry let them eat grass!' That's Van Dorn exactly. He'd use the working people's flesh and blood and bones to make him a carpet to walk through life the smoother on."

"You talk about Van Dorn getting such notions in France," put in Ackerman; "w'y, you're away off, Mark. France is the red-hottest kind of a republic — more republican than we are. They're the fellows —"

"Oh, it is, is it? The poor, idle, bloodless sponges of ex-counts, ex-dukes, and the rest of that sort of gentry that Van Dorn associates with over there were red-hot republicans, were they? Walking around cursing the people, watching their chance, hoping for the day when they can get back on to the necks of the people, — they're republicans, are they? Well, I guess not. I tell you, Joe, Van Dorn is not the kind of fellow to be friends with the real people of any country. It's the aristocracy — in other words, the vagrants, the sponges, the blood-suckers — that are his associates. And you fellows come and talk to me about that man being a friend to your Union! It's hard for me to have patience to listen to you!"

Joe Ackerman was a man who carried himself with a sort of dignity, despite his twenty years in the mine. "Well — well; let that go, then," he said, hesitatingly. "I — I —" He came to a troubled stop, and looked helplessly at his employer with dumb, appealing, dark eyes.

"You want to speak to me about something aside from committee business?" the other helped him out.

"Why, yes — that's it, that's it," agreed the president of the Local, in a relieved tone. "It's something the Union hain't got nothing to do with.

It's — it's about that there" — he glanced at the strip of plaster upon the other's head — "that there beer bottle," he concluded, naively.

"And you think the Union had nothing to do with the beer bottle, Joey?" returning to the familiar accost of their boyhood.

Ackerman shook his head. "You know as well as me, Mark, that the Union ain't 'round throwin' things at people when there ain't no strike on," he argued.

"The Union certainly threw some things at people when I used to belong to it," debated Strong, with a half-smile. "Yes, and, by George, they hit — and hit harder than this one did!"

"The Union lost a good man when you got rich, Mark," the miner commented. "But," falling suddenly anxious again, "about that there beer bottle: I hope you won't lay it on the Union. Because a lot of fool boys gets half-slung and —"

His hearer shivered slightly, and sat down.

"I think I know just who threw it, Ackerman," he said, sharply. "I — there was somebody about who gave me a clue. So, after all, the beer bottle comes out of the Union; and your assurances come out of the same place; and I understand one just as well as I do the other."

"I said you'd lay it to the Union," concluded the miner, in a discouraged tone.

"Let the Union put a stop to that sort of violence if it doesn't approve it," said Strong, grimly. "That's its business. Let it attend to such things — to keeping its young men straight, and providing better amusement for them than they can find at Yount's. Perhaps if it looks after these things it won't have so much time to tell me how to run my business."

He had spoken with bitterness, yet he put out a hand to the departing man and drew him kindly back.

"I want Union miners in my mine. I believe the Union can make of its men superior employés, as army training makes superior fighters. I believe there's a big future for organized labour, — but, Joe, they'll never get to it by trying to dictate to their employers on points that don't concern them. Sit down, Joe. Here comes your blessed committee."

CHAPTER III.

THE COMMITTEE

THEY filed into the room, six big, hulking, toil-crippled men. There was nothing in this simple, plain apartment to overawe them or embarrass them. The man at the desk was an old acquaintance — to some of them, an old friend. He had grown up in the mines. His physique was the stunted result of labour performed in the bowels of the earth while that form was in its growing stage. Trapper, driver, miner, timberman, boss — he knew it all; not from the ground up, but from beneath the ground up. And yet, perhaps for that very reason, they did not like to face him. “Bedad, ’tis like goin’ to Pat Hennessy and tellin’ him how he shall manage his goat, to trot up to Mark Strong and dictate to him about his mine,” Corrigan had said, as they came up the street.

A roar of laughter greeted this.

“’Tis,” asseverated the Irishman. “Hennessy does ill enough with that goat, God knows; and

likely Mark Strong does ill enough with the Twin Brothers. And yit, d'ye see? Hennessy raised that goat from a kid; and 'tis as though Mark Strong had raised the mine—it sorter belongs to him."

The first question brought forward was the prohibition Strong had put upon the sending of a committee up out of the mine with complaints.

The Union sanctions the custom of men laying down pick and shovel to go up as a committee and wait upon the superintendent with complaints. More than that, it pays them so much per hour for the time they thus pleasantly consume. Strong's contention was that his inspectors made the Twin Brothers a safe mine, as near as human care and foresight could, and that any grievances the men might have regarding the management of the mine could easily wait until the whistle had blown in the afternoon. He further asserted that the getting together of this committee meant that the men had been neglecting their work to compare grievances.

The slender figure in gray seated itself in the desk chair; those wonderful eyes, intolerable to the evil-doer, and capable of much childlike directness and frankness, looked his men over briefly.

"You say that I don't know how to appreciate

your situation," he began, "because I refuse to let a committee come up out of the Twin Brothers and dictate to me concerning the manner in which the mine shall be run. I don't refuse to receive you men that are regularly appointed by the Union when you come and talk over the various matters of our work, but I do refuse to have my workmen throw down their tools in working hours and bob up to me with every petty grievance they can rake out — yes, and *any* petty grievance. My bosses will have to run the mine till the whistle blows. Then, if anything of sufficient importance has occurred, the men can report it to me, or they can report it to the Union, and let the Union come to me about it. I say that the method you now pursue is offensive to an employer, and unsettling to his men, and I will not have it."

"And yet, Mr. Strong, I understand you were a miner yourself — and a member of the Mine Workers' Union."

This from a new man named Marchmont. If the speaker thought that such a reminder would be humiliating to Mark Strong, he was mistaken.

"I was that," the owner of the Twin Brothers replied to him. "I would be some inches taller if the Union had got its work in a little earlier."

"How do you make that out?" asked the spokesman.

"The Union, some years ago, made it impossible for boys under fourteen to labour in the mines. Some parents will lie about their children's ages, and unless the superintendent watches close, boys under that age are got past them; but I went into the mine to work beside my father when I was a little shaver of ten — and of course I never got my growth."

It waited close behind Joe Ackerman's loyal lips to tell his old associate and present employer that his soul had grown up tall if his body remained stunted. But no words came to the slow-witted fellow to clothe this somewhat delicate proposition, and he let it slip.

"I have many reasons for making the Twin Brothers as safe, as well run a mine, as can be put under ground," Strong went on. "Here's one of them — the main one: I had been helping my father in the mine for five years; I was a boy of fifteen when he was killed."

The little man bent forward and struck an impressive forefinger upon the table in front of him. "The men who owned that mine in which my father worked — John Bolingbroke was president of the company — are as responsible for his death as

though they had taken a chunk of coal and knocked him down. They knew the room into which we were sent was unsafe, — I'd say nothing against any committee which dropped work and came up out of a mine to report on such a roof as that — but there was no Union and no committee in those days. I was loading a car down near the neck of the room, and father was drilling at the face, when suddenly we heard a crackling, snapping, grinding sound — you know it well — ”

He glanced along the line of faces, and was answered with a nod or a low reply from one or two.

“ I looked up at the prop nearest me, and saw its cap slipping. Then I heard father call to me to run for my life. He knew — and I knew — that there was no use going back to him — but I tried to. There was a sharp crack, and the slate came down between us — he was under tons of it. They were a week digging out the body.”

In the moment of silence which followed Strong's last word, the men's heavy breathing sounded loud. Then the mine owner resumed, quietly :

“ But this is a different matter. I give you a safe mine to work in. I watch like a hawk to see there is nothing amiss in the Twin Brothers. If you've got a legitimate cause of dissatisfaction, I'm ready

to arbitrate — but have your committee come jawing to me during working hours — seeking to run my business for me — I will not.”

“But, Mr. Strong, we don’t seek to run your business. These things we — we — suggest, are unimportant little matters, that no doubt you’d take up yourself. You don’t want no scabs in the mine. If you stick by the Union, the Union will stick by you.”

“That ought to be so,” returned the employer, pleasantly, “but it isn’t. The Union men will work for me — just like any other men — as long as they feel like it, and I pay them what is right. I don’t want anything else, and they won’t do anything else. Your attitude, my friend, is that a man who belongs to the Union is all right, and a man who doesn’t belong to the Union — well, you call them rats or scabs. Now, I want miners in my mine. I like the idea of you men having a Union, and I wish they would take up matters which come properly within their province: keeping boys who are under age out of the mine — that is, helping me to do it; improving themselves in the work, and having such meetings for social enjoyment as they may choose; adding an insurance feature if they feel like it, and letting me mind my own business while they mind theirs.”

"Aw, the Union'll insure us fast enough," muttered an old miner at the end of the line.

"Yes, it will insure you when you strike. But if you're killed in the mine, it is your employer who has paid your premiums," amended Strong.

"Well, he ort to, ortn't he?" asked Gillespie.

"Of course he ought," agreed the other. "I'm only calling your attention to the fact that your Union, which neither insures you nor pays the premium on your insurance, stands ready to back you while you're striking, to injure your employer who does."

"'Tis the only power we've got, Mr. Strong," returned the leader, doggedly, "and we're obliged to use it."

"Perhaps we haven't reached that point in this country," Strong answered, a little sarcastically, "but they are getting along very nicely without it in New Zealand."

"This ain't New Zealand," the miner replied.

In his tone was all the ignorant man's gross contempt for that which lies beyond his little ken. Strong smiled, and returned to the matter in hand.

"I tell you, men, I've no complaint to make against the Union. It's only a few years old in this country — hardly grown up yet — and it's bound to have the faults of youth. When I was a miner, and

a member of the Miners' Union — and I was a mighty good earnest one — it was in its infancy, and it behaved as babies generally do. It got what it wanted by yelling and kicking. It's all right for a baby to get what it wants that way, and it was all right for the Union then. But a great organization like that ought to outgrow the kicking and yelling stage sometime. I think — I hope — I believe that the time has come for the Union to put on the dignity of manhood, and to earn consideration and give value received for the consideration."

"Well, a strike —" began the leader, a little uneasily, when Strong interrupted him, mildly:

"I believe that the strike is what old man Kesterson would call obsolescent — that is, it's going out of fashion; it will soon be a thing of the past. I wouldn't legislate against it, because there is no need. The Union must simply see that it is a weapon which served its turn, and is now no longer useful."

"It served its turn, did it?" inquired Marchmont, with sudden heat. "Well, Mr. Strong, it will serve a turn yet, for labour."

Strong nodded. "You think so? Well, that means that you'll have to test it. A man never learns anything save by experience. An organization of men has to learn the same way. For that

reason I'm extremely foolish to talk to you against strikes; but I'm going to do it. See here: the word strike is its own condemnation. It means a fight. Capital and labour do not want to fight. You come here to me to arbitrate with the expressed intention of avoiding a strike, or fight. But the men who are too handy with a strike are just like a man who is too handy with his gun — in the end they run up against law and order, and make as much trouble for themselves as they do for the other fellow."

"Most of us are willing to do that, if we can only hit the other fellow hard enough," agreed Marchmont, grimly.

"It isn't the hard hitting that I am so particularly objecting to," agreed Strong. "It's the quick hitting. That always means a feeling of weakness. The Union doesn't strike, nowadays, because it feels so strong, but because it's afraid the other fellow is stronger. Now, I tell you, my men, fundamentally, capital is not stronger than labour. Fundamentally, the strength is all with labour. If you could unite as one man, you would crush any one employer, no matter what his fortune. Of course it's asking more than there is in human nature, to suppose that the Union will be as united as the members of a man's body; and that is about the only strength capital has against

you. One of my objections to the strike is that it's a lie. You don't quit working in a man's mine because you want to quit, because you don't intend to work for that man on those terms again; if you did, you'd cripple him badly. An employer who was really so detested that not one of you would work for him (supposing you to be able to unite and hang together indefinitely) would be a ruined man. But yours is a bluff — a stick that you shake at the man. You all quit at once, and in the most inconvenient season, with a view to showing him how dependent he is upon you. Well, that was needed once. The employers did not realize how dependent they were upon their men. I believe that they all do realize it now, and I believe that in the years to come you will do something better than strike; just as you are giving up the boycott — and the boycott wasn't to be despised in its time, when the straits of labour were really desperate."

"They're desperate now, Mr. Strong; they're desperate to-day. Any man that can read the papers and not realize that the burning question of the hour is, shall the workingman be given a share in the dollar he earns, — well, we've done something with the Unions, and the strikes you think so bad of, and the boycott you say we don't use no more; but I'd call the condition of labour in these

United States at this day, desperate — that's what I'd call it — desperate."

"Um," said Strong, with an inscrutable look through his glasses, and a half-smile. "And so you men ask of me, and of all mine owners, what you are not willing to do yourself. You say that I shall agree to hire none but Union miners. It's probable I might prefer to do that; but I have to do it unfettered, do it without promising."

"And what is it we are not willing to do?" asked the spokesman.

"A thing I didn't ask of you, and which no employer asks of you, but which would be exactly the same to you as this promise is to me; you are not willing to bind yourselves to work only for me. I'm to employ nobody but you, but you are not to work for me alone — individually, I mean."

There was an open smile on the faces of the committee.

"You employers have got us there," said the spokesman. "We've bought little homes here, some of us; we don't know anything but mining, and we can't go some place else and get some other kind of work."

"That's a very tiresome old — lie," said Strong, gently. "I don't mean that you men want to lie to me, because you don't; you're just repeating what

you've heard from the platform and read in labour papers. You could sell your houses here, individually, more easily than I could sell the Twin Brothers. You are not tied to me more than I am tied to you by the force of circumstances. Any one of you could get a job half-way across the country to-morrow, and go to it. You know that's so."

Here he touched the pride of the good workman whose boast it is that he would never be out of employment. The committee were the best men in the mine, and it irked them to let it go that if Mark Strong discharged them to-morrow they would be lacking means or opportunity to support their families. They looked at each other dubiously; their employer's quiet words seemed often like a trap. Should they say yes or no to this?

"You know how it is in a strike," the leader pursued, finally. "The men hang around the mine because they can't get away; and the women and children starve."

"In a strike — yes — that's just it," agreed Strong. "In a strike the power of the individual is destroyed; he cannot act independently. Other mines are not needing the whole body of men, and the thriftless element is urged into yet more thriftless courses by being supported by the Union. I sometimes think that is what a good many of them

strike for. But let the Union decide to-morrow that it didn't want its men to work for Mark Strong; let you men set about it as I would to dispose of some stock I didn't wish to retain. I wouldn't flood the market, I'd let it go by littles. You men could seek employment like that, and actually leave me without a driver to whack a mule in the Twin Brothers. You know you could. That's the way I'd run a strike nowadays, if I were back in the Union. I suspect I was a fool to tell you the plan; but I counted on your being enough bigger fools not to put it in operation."

The men looked at each other in bewilderment. It sounded well, but of course it was a trap. They sheered away from it, and brought forward again the grievance with which they had come.

"Mr. Strong, we want to hear you say that the Twin Brothers will be put on the same basis as the Gloriana. We want to carry back word to the boys that there's one more employer who finds it to his interest to stand by the Union and run a close Union mine."

"But I don't think it to my interest — nor yours," rejoined Strong. "I will strike hands with the Union in all things reasonable. I'll give you a Union hall that shall be as good as any hall this side of Chicago, and it sha'n't cost you a cent. But

I shall continue to hire and discharge whom I please, and to run the Twin Brothers as I think best."

"A Union hall! A club-house!" snorted Marchmont. "Do you think that's a fair return for what the Union offers you?"

"The Union offers me — nothing," returned Strong, concisely. "If you'd incorporate, so you could be held to anything, so you could be sued, there might be some use in talking of what the Union can offer. As it is, you're water — that's what you are — water. You can come up against an employer with this strike you're so free to threaten, and you can drown him out. But let him try to grasp you and hold you to any promise or agreement, and you're water, your words are so much spilled water on the ground. See how nicely they get along in New Zealand; the Unions there are responsible parties."

"Mr. Strong, do you hint that if we made you a promise here to-day the Union wouldn't keep it? And" — hotly — "we don't give a damn about New Zealand!"

"No. I don't hint it — I never was known to hint anything in all my life, Marchmont — I say it out, flat-footed. Who would I hold to it? You'd all be sorry, and come around and tell me so. But if the Union didn't stand behind you, what would

you do? I'll not make any promises to a willapuss-wallapus like that. When the Union becomes a body corporate, I'll treat with it. While it remains a club, I'll —" His voice softened; he smiled a bit humorously — "I'll offer it a club-house."

"Then we are to understand," said Marchmont, rising, "that this is your last word." Marchmont was spokesman generally for the committee. "We're to go back to the Union and tell them that Mr. Strong of the Twin Brothers knows better how to run the United Mine Workers' Union than the men who have built it up from the beginning, are we? Are we to say that?"

"You might," snapped Strong, with sudden asperity. "You may say anything you please to the Union — I may as well give you that permission, for you'll do it anyhow. If you told the truth, you'd say to them that I know more about running my own business than they do — and I propose to run it."

It was not a politic speech; it was not a wise one; but Strong's patience was suddenly at an end. He felt that he had made all the concessions (verbally), and that the stupidity of these men with whom he was dealing merited a lesson.

"All right — all right," said Marchmont, nursing his hat in the curve of his arm in a fashion quite

inimitable. "Gentlemen, we may as well be going. No need to trespass on Mr. Strong's valuable time." This last with cutting emphasis.

"Quite so," agreed the little man in gray. And the committee filed out, the six big, shambling, toil-bowed men, stepping heavily, giving forth a strong suggestion that they left the one little man in gray at the desk to that destruction which his evil ways, stubbornly persisted in, must bring upon him.

CHAPTER IV.

JULIA LLEWELLYN

As the committee shook hands and made their final adieux to each other in the yard, a woman passed on the opposite side of the street; a tall woman, walking with a peculiar, swinging grace.

She nodded to Joe Ackerman, who had fallen behind with Marchmont, the new man.

"Whew! but she's a beauty!" ejaculated Marchmont.

"Yes, that's Mark Strong's old sweetheart," explained Ackerman, looking after her.

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Marchmont. "Is that why he never married?" he added, eagerly; for men in all walks of life are confirmed gossips, though tradition lays the weakness upon the other sex.

"Well, yes, I reckon so," assented Ackerman, doubtfully. "At least, everybody says that's why. I've known Mark Strong for twenty years. We worked together in the southern part of the State.

I was in the mine when his father was killed. When he come up to Iroquois, he'd begun to rise in the world. Everybody said he'd do just about what he has done."

"I expect he had help," hazarded Marchmont.

"No, he didn't — except such help as was inside his own hide. He was always a master-hand to study nights. A loyal member of the Union — I'll say that for him. When Mark got to be boss, he had more time to study, and he had some money to spend on it. He bought books, and he hired him a teacher. It wasn't any time before all the folks that felt themselves too good to associate with the miners was having him at their houses, and letting their girls go with him. Even old Doc Copeland," he nodded to the graceful figure disappearing down the street, "let his daughter Jule, the prettiest girl in Iroquois, as you can see even yet, go with Mark Strong."

The men were following the woman at a distance.

"She's sure a good looker now," agreed Marchmont. "I reckon she's married?"

"A widow," supplied Ackerman. "Her and Strong was engaged, as everybody supposed. The story is that they quarrelled. Anyhow, she married Jack Llewellyn, the dirtiest low-down blackguard

of a drunken brute that ever disgraced the name of miner. Well, she left him."

"You say Strong stayed single for her? I'd think they'd 'a' been married," suggested Marchmont.

"No, her and Mark Strong don't seem to have no notion of marrying," Joe returned. "I suppose he could get most anybody he'd want — maybe he don't feel like marrying a miner's widow. They say that there sister of Van Dorn's courts him everywhere she can catch him."

Marchmont whistled. Whether it was this statement, or the fact that the woman ahead of them was turning into the gateway of a small house, did not appear.

"Is that where she lives?" he inquired.

"No, that's Mike Carmody's she's goin' in to. Jule's lived alone since Jack died, just her and her boy."

"There's a child, then?"

"A child? Oh, I guess Bob Llewellyn must be sixteen or seventeen; and he's about the most unpromising young fool we've got in the Local," said Ackerman, gloomily. "I'd 'a' turned him out — or thrashed him — before now, if it hadn't been for his mother. I've known Jule since she was a girl, and she has such a pretty way of putting it about

Bob, that I never can come down on him as hard as he deserves."

"That's the way a woman's fetching up ruins a boy," grumbled Marchmont, as the two men passed the gate.

Meantime, inside the Carmody shanty Jule had found Katie, the old man's daughter. The girl's eyes were red with weeping; she had sobbed till her voice was flatted and dull.

"I sent for you, Mrs. Llewellyn," she said, nervellessly, "to see if you could help me about selling these things."

Jule looked at the humble trousseau spread out upon the bed. She had helped to make most of the articles, and had worked hard over them at a reduced price, because Katie Carmody had so little and desired so much — it was always Jule's weakness to indulge the failings of others.

"Why, you're not going to give Charlie up, are you?" she asked, in a startled tone.

"Give him up?" echoed the girl, bitterly; and then a rush of tears from the fountain which had seemed run dry, choked her utterance for a moment. "I reckon I might as well tell you what the town will know before I'm done with it — Charlie's gone back on me."

Jule dropped into a chair, and took some of the

sleazy finery in her lap, fingering the folds with a gentle hand.

"Sit down, Kate," she said, finally. "I guess I've got to talk to you. There are some things I hate dreadfully to speak about, but — I will, if — if it can do any good."

The Carmody girl knew poor Jule's married history; she was aware that the patient, hard-worked seamstress had the name of having, in her beautiful, wilful youth, jilted Mark Strong — just as Charlie had now jilted her, Katie. She knew that Julia Llewellyn had unaccountably married a man far below her in the social scale, a miner, as Charlie was, and again, like Charlie, a man who drank. Everybody in Iroquois had to know these latter features, for Julia had lived the tragic life in which she was neither maid, wife, nor widow.

"I don't know just where to begin," said the older woman, taking the girl's rough, toil-hardened hand, and stroking it softly. "I want to help you to the knowledge that Charlie's going back on you may be the best thing that ever happened to you."

She was so long silent after this that the girl, filled with coarse curiosity, suggested: "Maybe you mean that you've always felt it was a good thing you threw Mark Strong over?"

A quiver went through Julia's form, and she laid the girl's hand down, though gently.

"No," she said, decidedly. "I didn't mean that. It has nothing to do with Mark Strong. He is one of the best men God ever made — but I have nothing to do with him. What I meant to tell you of was my husband, Jack Llewellyn. I was about as old as you when I married Jack."

"And mother says you were the prettiest thing she ever laid her eyes on," said Katie, with interest.

"I guess what good looks I had turned my head," said Jule, wearily. "Jack drank about as much as your Charlie."

"But Charlie had promised me that he'd quit drinking when he was married," put in the girl, eagerly.

Jule looked at her in pity.

"Don't you know, dear, that's what they all say? It seems as though any girl ought to realize that the common run of men will do more for a sweetheart than they will for a wife."

She seemed to take counsel with her own soul, to dread repeating to these alien ears what had been so fiery a trial — and to decide that she ought to do so.

"Jack Llewellyn didn't drink any more than your

Charlie. He was a handsome boy. He had pretty ways. I'd quarrelled with the — man — I'd quarrelled with somebody else, and I married Jack all in a hurry, without giving a thought to consequences. My dear girl, a drunken man is a drunken man; none of them are nice, or choice, or even decent. I walked through hell with Jack for nearly a year, and then, just before my son was born, my husband came home a little drunker than usual, or perhaps he had been drinking a different kind of liquor, for he looked wicked, and he kept still, and that was not generally his way. It ought to have frightened me — and it did. But what could I do? I was married to him — the same as you would have been married to Charlie, you know, Katie, if this thing had gone through as you hoped it would. We were all alone in our little shanty, and there was nobody to say he shouldn't knock me down."

"Did he? Did the nasty brute do that? I've heard, but I never believed it."

"Hush," said Jule, softly. "He's dead, remember. Maybe he was a brute — but what kind of a fool had I been to marry him, when I might have expected no better? Oh, yes, Jack knocked me down. I left him, you know, and for three years it was his one determination in life (when he'd get drunk) to kill me and get the child. That's what took me to

live with Owen Llewellyn's family. Owen could handle him when he was that way."

The girl had almost forgotten her own woes in the elation of hearing this woman, who spoke so seldom of her personal affairs, talk freely concerning them.

"Is it true that he tried to burn your house when you set up a dressmaking shop? Is that why you never dared to, and just made your living by days' works?" she asked, breathlessly.

Jule nodded with closed lips.

"I don't want to seem to be telling a lot about the shortcomings of a man that's dead and gone," she said, rising and laying a hand on the girl's shoulder. "I just want to remind you, Katie, that you might be a great deal worse off."

The girl turned her face against Jule's white apron, and drew the arm around her neck.

"God bless you, Mrs. Llewellyn," she said, in a muffled voice. "I think you're an angel, to hurt your own heart — to go against your own feelings — for the sake of helping me. If it wasn't for the speech of people, I don't know so well but that I could feel just as you say. But I do hate to be pointed at as being a girl that some man went back on."

The rich red surged up in Jule's face; Katie Car-

mody had put finger upon the sorest spot in the other's soul.

"For God's sake, never think of that!" she cried. "It was there I shipwrecked my life. You wouldn't think it, when I threw over a man like Mark Strong to marry Jack Llewellyn — but it was because of the talk of a lot of silly girls that I went with, who were always saying that Mark was ugly and common-looking, and Jack was just grand. Oh, my child! you must learn that the speech of people isn't worth the breath it takes to make it."

"I should think he — Strong, I mean — would have come right to you after you left Jack, and helped you to get a divorce. I had a lady friend down in Evansville that had an experience like yours. She's married to the sober man now, and they're doing splendid. But I expect you know your own plans best," stealing a look at the tall woman. "Maybe he did come, and you turned him down." The girl was on tenter-hooks of greedy inquisitiveness. "Maybe that's the reason that since you're a real widow — maybe that's why —"

She broke off in a sort of terror.

Here again was the sore spot, and Julia's head was thrown back haughtily. She was sorry, in that moment, that she had attempted to help poor Kate.

The girl saw the thought in her face, and cried out, deprecating:

"Oh, don't mind me, Mrs. Llewellyn — don't! I'm just a fool. Mother says I do say the awfulest things to folks; she wonders I've got a friend left! But I do hate Mark Strong, and always will — for your sake. He can't appreciate you."

"Don't, Katie! You don't know what you're talking about," said Julia, sharply. She turned to the garments on the bed, and went on with a palpable effort:

"I wouldn't sell these. They're made to fit you. You go on and wear them. You won't get half what they're worth if you try to sell them. And, mind what I tell you, dear; don't pay attention to what people say. If you listen to others, you'll have no peace of your life."

Brave advice! But all the way home Kate Carmody's hints obtruded themselves upon poor Jule's mind.

There had not been a month of the hundreds which were counted in Julia Llewellyn's anomalous widowhood — when Jack Llewellyn was living, but she was not living with him — that some friend did not suggest or insinuate to her that Mark Strong might procure her legal separation from her drunken husband, and offer her marriage. It was always

in Owen Llewellyn's mind; he told her clumsily, and at great length, the story of a relative of his own, in which a well-doing man had not only suggested the divorce, but paid the "good smart lawyer" to get it.

Jule well knew that, so far as legal grounds went, she might have had a divorce at any time after she left her poor drunken husband. But her answer to Owen was always:

"I married Jack of my own free-will, brother. If I didn't know that he would get drunk and strike me, at least I knew well enough that such a thing was not impossible, and I did not use any reason in the matter at all. I just married Jack to satisfy my own wilful whim. I don't believe, Owen, that the law can free me of all responsibility by making a decree of divorce,—that couldn't change me or Jack, or the real conditions. I don't think there is any obligation on me to live with Jack—I don't think I did him any good when I did live with him, or that such a life would be right now. But I won't get any divorce—I'll just stay as I am."

This was truly poor Julia's view of her unhappy situation. But the thought down deep in her heart which she did not utter, was this: If she cast Jack off, if she sought a legal divorce from him, it would seem like taking a step toward her old lover. Then,

if Mark failed to offer himself, how would her humiliation be doubled!

What Mark Strong's feelings were in the matter it would have been hard to conjecture. He must have suffered in seeing the girl he had loved with a single heart go so far astray, make so terrible a mistake, then pay for it so terrible a price. However this may have been, none knew what the man's feelings were; and the two who had been betrothed lovers used now toward each other the manner of kindly old acquaintances.

She knew — as everybody in Iroquois knew — the simple life of the owner of the Twin Brothers. It was not alone that he had put no woman in her place — it seemed that he had put nothing else in that place — that his was an existence so bare, so shorn, as to be almost a thing deformed. Yet Jule Llewellyn was left, with the rest of the world, outside of this life.

These things could not fail to be galling to the woman. Women are taught that it is well-nigh a slur not to be ardently pursued by a lover. It is possible that Julia never asked herself whether she would have been pleased had Mark Strong followed the course suggested by Owen; it is certain that she could not have thought he would be himself and do so; yet, as year succeeded year, it is not strange

that she came to have a slighted feeling, and that her old lover was mentioned in the household as an enemy, one who, growing rich, had put an affront upon them all. It is a singular thing how unsuccessful people saddle their failures upon their more prosperous intimates. They would seem to say that Fate has but so many good gifts in her hand, and, having lavished all upon these favourites, has left only trials, disappointments, unsuccess, for the others.

Poor Bob was full of it; crude, affectionate, persistently admiring his beautiful mother, he felt that he was the young knight to avenge her; and Mark Strong meant to him everything that was overbearing, insulting, intolerable.

People do not run away from such conditions. The Llewellyns stayed. Owen was an excellent workman, and as merit was sure of its due in the Twin Brothers, he went on up from fire boss to pit boss. Then his activity in the Union began to take most of his time, and, being made district president, he gave up work and his home in Iroquois to devote his entire attention to it. Owen had been ambitious for his children; he had one daughter who was a teacher in the public schools of the town in which he now lived, and a son doing well in business there. Perhaps some thought of the ad-

vantage such a connection would be to him and his mingled with his earnestness to see Strong renew his addresses to Julia.

Owen Llewellyn's upbringing of his own children had been bad. As American parents are, he was fond of them, proud of them, and ambitious for them; and in so far this was good, and good for them. But his very pride and fondness counselled him to teach them to be insubordinate and vindictive like himself. If a teacher disciplined one of them, the child was removed from the school, often after a scene in which the father encouraged the youngster to speak his mind to the instructor. When quarrels came up between the young Llewellyns and their playmates, they were sure of their father's approval if they hit hardest and held out longest. The cause of contention was not apt to be investigated.

Though it was true that he controlled his brother when Jack was drunk and dangerous, his influence upon the younger man had never been for the good. Proud of Jack's beauty and courage, exulting, in some sort, in his very vices, Owen had gloried in the fact that his brother stole the sweetheart of a man in so many ways his superior.

Within six months of Julia's marriage to his rival, Strong was working superintendent of the

Gloriana. Poor Jack, drunk, and swelling with triumph to think he had supplanted a man in this position, went one day into the office to crow over the pale, quiet young fellow.

When he was sober and planned the thing, Llewellyn had intended that there should be many present to see Strong's humiliation; but when he was drunk enough to relish the job, he chanced on the noon hour, when the two had the room to themselves. What occurred there was never explained; it seemed impossible that a man of Strong's physique could handle one of Llewellyn's height and brawn; but certain it is that Jack was thrown out of the office and the door shut after him, just as a party of his fellow miners came by to pick him up.

So evident did it seem that Strong could not have overcome the young Welshman without help, that Owen Llewellyn went to him to tell him what he thought of such behaviour.

There was no lack of auditors for this second interview: almost the entire office force was present when the elder brother came over from the Culleoka to speak his mind to the young superintendent.

"Your brother was drunk, and he made himself offensive," explained Strong. He felt that he could not afford to show temper toward the man who had robbed him of the girl he loved; it would pass

for jealousy, and lower his standing with his fellows. Therefore he was not less, but more patient than was his wont with both brothers.

Misinterpreting this patience, and presuming upon it, Llewellyn read the lesser man a long lecture, concluding:

“You say, yourself, that Jack was drunk. You ought to be ashamed to jump on a man when he’s helpless that way, and try to pay out a grudge by beating him up and pitching him down some steps.”

Strong did not, as another man would have been apt to do, argue the point; he did not even assert, what everybody knew to be true, that Jack Llewellyn was a fair match for a man of his size as long as the Welshman could keep on his feet.

“You’re sober, aren’t you?” he asked, abruptly.

“Don’t you give me any of your impudence,” roared the big man.

“I wanted to know,” pursued Strong, quietly; “for if you don’t get out of this office in three minutes — just three minutes, Owen — I’m going to throw you out. And if I find I can’t do it — if you’re too big for me to lift — I’ll get somebody that can.”

“Going to call in help, are you? Well, you’re on your own ground now, Mark Strong,” jeered

the other, furiously. "I reckon I'd better go, — but wait till I catch you away from your crowd."

"You know I have no crowd," returned the young superintendent, contemptuously; and he scarcely raised his eyes from the open book upon which he was writing, as the big man strode out.

"You'll have trouble with that fellow yet; better have kept on the good side of him," suggested the bookkeeper.

"I doubt if he has any good side — for me," Strong answered, cheerfully. "I don't think there'll be any trouble with him. Jack came to work in the Gloriana, so he told me the other day, to get a chance to do me up; but he isn't making use of his excellent opportunities. I guess they both talk a good deal."

And there the matter was dropped — by Strong. Soon after, Julia found it necessary to leave her husband and take refuge with her brother-in-law. This removed her temporarily from the neighbourhood of the Gloriana. But as year followed year, and Strong established the Twin Brothers, was made its vice-president and general manager, and was, in fact, practical owner of the plant, Owen himself (in a time of depression when Strong's mine was the only one working in the Iroquois district, and there was great distress among the miners)

came asking for a job. And Bob worked in the Twin Brothers from the time he was of legal age to work in a mine; but he always, as himself would have phrased it, "had it in" for his employer, and this grumbling threat of a strike offered his opportunity.

Then news came that Jack was dying. The poor girl was hurried from her sewing-machine to hear him say that he was sorry, that if he had life to live over again, he'd do better, to forgive him before he went; and after that there came a little time when even Julia, and certainly Owen, resented Jack's death by an added distrust of Mark Strong.

But when Jack had been gone a year, and Mark Strong made no movement to renew his friendship, even, with the widow, no man could guess at the agonies of humiliation she suffered. A woman might fancy the sleepless nights when her eyes interrogated the dark, and she wondered, if she had been different, had she done this, had she done that, had she held to the position in the public schools — which Jack lost to her by hanging about in a dangerous drunken state so that the board dismissed her, — had she been or done any of these things, would it have helped her any with Mark? Did he think a seamstress too far beneath him? Had she lost her beauty and attractiveness?

But to one of these questions her mirror answered no; and to the other, her multitude of loving friends. People did love her. She herself was aware that she was handsomer than she had been as a girl. What was it, then?

Mark's way — she knew that. She, of all people, knew best the working of Mark Strong's mind. She could imagine that he said to himself that he had sought this woman once to his wounding, and that he would not seek her again. And knowing all this so surely, deep in her heart there trembled that impulse to become herself the suitor, to bridge the intolerable gulf between them, which made her more reserved, less demonstrative in Strong's society, and more willing to hear the condemnation of him which was continual in her own household and circle.

CHAPTER V.

A MEETING OF THE LOCAL

ALL day there had been a simmer of suppressed excitement in Yount's place. Men left the front door of the saloon by twos and threes, and went with a certain air of secrecy up the narrow stairway at its side, leading to the big room above where Union meetings were held.

It was known to Yount and a few others that Patterson, the district organizer, was in the hall above. Oddly enough, he had not been seen on the streets at all. It seemed that he preferred to hold state in the meeting hall, and let the men come to him. This was not the usual tactics of the district organizer, particularly when he was known to be favourable to a strike; and there was a considerable amount of opposition among the men in the Twin Brothers.

Joe Ackerman, president of the Local and avowed leader of the non-strikers, was puzzled, yet pleased, by the languid behaviour of Patterson. "If he

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expects to get his gang out and carry the strike, he's got to get a move on him," chuckled the big swart Dutchman.

"Maybe's he's moving more than you think," suggested McFadden, his more cautious lieutenant. "Patterson's got something up his sleeve for us, and we'd better watch out what it is. I don't like his hanging round the hall all day. And Billy Dempsey sick — or so they say — he ain't in the mine; but I bet dollars to doughnuts he's in that hall."

Ackerman shook his head; it was out of his power to see anything which was not exactly in front of his nose.

Evening found the non-strikers going to their Union meeting almost in a body. There was a singular lack of opposition. "I'm hanged if them fellers ain't give the thing up, and decided to stay at home!" crowed Ackerman, gleefully.

"Well, they're a-going to stay where they are, wherever that is," agreed McFadden, grimly, as the two climbed the narrow wooden stairs side by side. The dirty, narrow way was silent and deserted; nobody going up or down, no light from the doorway above.

"I told you so," said Ackerman. "Hain't a soul of 'em come yet."

McFadden only grunted in answer. His wary

eye was searching the steps, calculating their width, noting that the turn near the top made it a bad place for a scuffle.

“Why, the boy ain’t even come to light the lamps, — the door’s locked,” said Ackerman, who had pressed a little ahead. “The door’s locked, and the bar’s up,” he added, shaking the knob and hearing the panels rattle against the barrier.

“You think the boy could jest evaporate through the chimney and leave the bar up, do you?” drawled McFadden.

“Gosh!” ejaculated Ackerman, again shaking the door softly. He was a mild man and full of boyish bywords which sat quaintly upon his inches and his bulk. “Gosh, Melindy! You’re right, Mc. They’ve got us fenced out.” He looked inquiringly at his shrewder companion.

Two men were ascending the steps behind them. “What’s up?” came the query; and the answer was received with laughter by one and curses by the other.

“You demand admission, Joe,” counselled McFadden. “You’re the president, and they’ve got to answer you.”

It appeared that those within did not share McFadden’s opinion; dead silence followed various hammerings and kickings of the door.

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"Patterson! Patterson!" roared the president. "This is no way for a grown man to behave. This ain't no child's play. There's a meeting of the Local appointed in this room for this evening, and, by God! I'm going to hold that meeting." The president was warming to his work.

"I guess you'll catch your meetin' 'fore you hold it," snickered somebody in the rapidly augmenting ranks of those waiting upon the stair.

"Shut up, down there," growled the president. "If any of you fellers don't want to stick by me to get this door down, you can go home; but you don't stand there and chew the rag."

McFadden had made one or two attempts upon the door with his shoulder. The poor foothold given by the ten-inch step made this extremely difficult. Now Ackerman added his size and bulk; the two men swung in together, and the door rattled and bounced upon its hinges.

"Another and we'll have it down!" shouted the president. But no other assault was necessary.

"Hold on — hey, hold up! — we're sending out a man to talk to you," came the word from within.

"Rush him; jam the door wide open when he comes!" counselled McFadden, in a hurried whisper.

But Ackerman, all for law and order, and believing still that his Branch was loyal to his sway, held the Scotchman back, as Pat Cassiday stepped out.

"What do you want?" inquired the emissary, jauntily.

"That's a hell of a question to ask me — the president of this Local — on meeting night, at the door of my own hall," responded Ackerman.

"'Tain't a regular meeting night," said Cassiday, impudently. "There's a committee setting in that room now that knows its business. We don't need you."

McFadden had withdrawn to the foot of the short flight of steps which led from the landing at the turn directly up to the door. Now he called:

"Ackerman — Joe! Come down here. Don't you get too close to that fellow."

And the man behind him echoed the caution in various forms; for anybody but Joe Ackerman would have suspected armed treachery. His slow mind was still turning over Cassiday's statement that it was not a regular meeting night.

"What's that got to do with it?" he inquired, finally. "This is a called meeting, and I called it myself — to meet Patterson."

This gave a new turn to his thoughts. Patter-

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son was at the root of the trouble; he would settle with Patterson.

"Bert Patterson, come out and face me — if you dare! If you don't come out in three minutes, I'm coming in," he called.

They had heard, as Cassiday stepped out, the key turn and the bar drop into place after him. Now Patterson's voice sounded from within, and a hum, as of many other voices, accompanied and followed it.

"How you comin' in, Joey?"

Ackerman's wrath, the proverbial, deadly wrath of a patient man, flared up at this.

"I'm going to take this d——d Irishman you've sent out, and break the door down with him," he roared.

The prospect was not an inviting one to Cassiday; yet he stood several feet above his adversary, and he knew that those within would send him reinforcements at a signal.

Ackerman moved up the stairs, guarding his head as best he could, but not watching the Irishman as he ought. When he came within reach of the latter's fist, it shot out — its knuckles armed — caught the big man on the side of the head and sent him rolling down to McFadden.

The doorkeeper whistled once, evidently the

signal for opening the door. The men on the stairs huddled together like frightened sheep. Ackerman had not risen, and McFadden was bending over him. The Irishman whistled again, supplementing his signal with a shout.

“Send me three men, and we’ll clear the stairs!”

They came: Bill Dempsey, who had been playing sick, and acting as Patterson’s special assistant; Brawley Culp, armed with the bar, which he had pulled from its socket on the door-jamb; and young Talley Self.

“Single file!” yelled Cassiday. “Let Culp get ahead with that bar — and give ’im room to swing it! Aw, you young fool,” to the boy who was pressing ahead, “put up that gun. We ain’t come to guns — yet.”

The men on the stairs, unprepared for a fight, turned and ran. McFadden had helped the chief to his feet.

“Come on, Joe,” he urged, pulling at Ackerman, who seemed to be dazed. “No use standing here to be hammered. But we’ll come back again,” he called to the men above-stairs.

The man with the bar set its end against the back of the retreating president, and deliberately rolled him down the stairs, amid the laughter of those above.

Ackerman's adherents retreated into the saloon; it is not pleasant to be identified with a losing cause. Meantime, there gathered in the street before Yount's place a crowd of persons more or less interested in the question of the strike. Many of these were women, whose high, excited voices might be heard above the hum of the deeper tones, cheering on the cause of the besieged, or jeering shrilly at the apparently defeated besiegers. A woman crying out in the street is always championing the worst proposition.

Ackerman sat on the lowest step, inside the little dark entry at the foot of the stairs; McFadden had brought a glass of water, and stood beside him.

"You'd better go home, Joe," he counselled. "Them was brass knucks he hit you with, and no telling what he's done to your head."

"You go to hell!" said Ackerman, kindly. "My head's all right. Give me another swallow of water, and I'll go inside and get the boys, and we'll rush that door."

He looked, not overconfidently, up the narrow stairway, now silent and deserted once more. Suddenly a hand rested lightly upon his shoulder.

"Why don't you try the back way?" asked a quiet voice.

"Mark Strong!" exclaimed the big man.

"Hush! Not so loud; I'm hardly supposed to be about where the Local meets," cautioned the other. "But I've attended many a meeting in this same hall — you and me, Joey. I wonder you didn't think of the back way."

"There ain't any," remonstrated McFadden.

But Ackerman was slapping his knee and chuckling, in spite of his bruised face.

"Lord, it's you, Mark, for a scrimmage like this. I mind the time you come in through the window, with twenty of us at your back, and put Cohen out of the hall."

Several loiterers had paused to look in at the entry. Strong stood with his back to them, and avoided recognition; yet he felt it was time to move on. Once out in the darkness of the street, he turned back. How familiar it all was. Was it last week, or only yesterday, that much the same crowd had filled that place to see him send Cohen and his crowd fighting and swearing down the steps? His blood tingled at thought of it. And now it meant more to him than it could have meant in the old days. Inside that upper room was a man who received a fat salary for fomenting and continuing just such quarrels as these. About him were a score of men who ate Strong's bread — and defied him. In the street were the usual number of hys-

terical, ill-governed women, who, lacking grand opera or a horse show, longed for the excitement of a strike.

Poor, sensible, obtuse Joe, leading his majority of non-strikers, had little chance against this noisy minority. The steps of the little man in gray lagged—halted. He turned, looked back; why not? It was dark; he had been among them and unrecognized before. He would but see to the carrying out of that plan which he had proposed to Ackerman. He ran to the alleyway which passed the back of the saloon.

There, as he expected, he found a group of six or eight men. McFadden had laid his plans well; one of the non-striking men was haranguing the crowd in front of the saloon, while others disposed themselves prominently in the light, with a view to keeping up a noise and taking off the attention of those above-stairs from this attack in the rear. Only so many men were to be employed here as could be made useful.

Strong saw them drag up a ladder, set it against the window-sill, and Ackerman prepare to mount.

“Joe, that won’t do,” he remonstrated, again putting a hand unexpectedly upon the exiled ruler’s shoulder.

If Ackerman recognized his employer, he gave no sign of having done so.

"What's the matter with it?" he inquired, impatiently.

"Don't you see they'll tip your ladder over?"

"McFadden and Burke will hold it."

"That's no good. They'll have you, when you poke your head in there, and you standing on the ladder."

"Well — well," urged the president, almost testily; "what have you got that's better?"

"Why, the shed roof, there. And then climb on to that covered stairway that goes up the side, and these other boys can go up with you — there ought to be ten more of them."

Ackerman saw the reasonableness of this scheme. McFadden was sent around in front to quietly withdraw ten men. The window above, which was directly behind the speaker's platform, could be seen, glowing dully with the light from within. A flag covered the greater part of it, and through its folds the light came in such a way as to make it apparent that no watcher had been posted there. Those above had evidently not thought of this opening at all.

Strong felt that it was time for him to go. He

was unwilling that any of the men should know he had taken so active a part in this matter.

"See, Joe, look here — you take that ladder up on the shed roof with you, throw it across, and climb over to the stairway roof; then pull your ladder over and go up from there. That'll make a way for the whole crowd to get in quick. Don't you go in there alone."

The president of the Local laughed bitterly. His heart was too hot and sore to accept moderate counsel.

"I wish I had you to boss the job," he muttered. "I expect it would be better done than I'll do it. But I see you're off — of course you'd have to leave. And I'm going into that meeting — alive or dead — alone, or with the rest of the boys. I'm going in there."

At the corner Strong turned and looked back. Some points of blacker blackness were moving against the saloon wall at the rear. By leaning forward he could see the lighted faces of the crowd in the street before the building; and he guessed from the shouts that sensible McFadden had detailed some men to make a feint of attacking the front door once more. He sighed a little, muttering:

"Maybe I did poor old Joe more harm than

good. A man must either be in a thing, or out of it; and I'm out of the Union."

His brow contracted as he heard, down the street a little way, his name yelled. His mouth set in grim lines.

"Fools. Well, they must have enough of their folly;" and he passed on toward where the Captain waited with his buggy.

Back at the hall, Ackerman, with two others, scrambled across the ladder and on to the stairway roof. Then some clumsy foot kicked the ladder, their improvised bridge, away, and it fell rattling to the ground below. It was just such a mischance as this that Strong's leadership would have provided against. But Strong was necessarily far on his way toward the station, and thick-headed Joe must make up in boldness what he lacked in wit.

The bunch of men on the roof crouched silent, hearkening intently to see if the sound of the falling ladder alarmed those within. Amid the noises from the street in front, its clatter appeared to go unnoticed. Ackerman reached up toward the window; he could barely touch the sill with his finger-ends. He whispered:

"Here! each of you take a leg; and when I say 'up,' heave me into the room."

"It won't do, Ackerman," remonstrated Wess

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James. "There ain't no tellin' how soon we can get up after you — got to have that ladder here, and another man acrost on it to help us up, before we can even start."

"You do what I tell you," whispered Ackerman, shortly, peering down into the dark. "The boys is gettin' that ladder in place. If they don't get it fixed, and they don't nobody come, I ain't caring. I belong in that meeting, and into it I'm going — even if I have to go all by myself. It won't bark your jaw none when I skate in on my face — will it?"

CHAPTER VI.

WAR!

INSIDE the hall the kerosene lamps flared. Patterson, glorious in acknowledged authority, and open victory over the lawful head of the organization, sprawled in the chair. Upon the benches before him the men were disposed, with some attempt at order; yet it was not such a meeting as Ackerman would have held.

Motions were put and forgotten without a vote, and there was a good deal of boisterous chaffing. The chairman had just rapped sharply upon the table.

"Gentlemen, we've got to get down to business," he said.

A shout from the street in front sent half his meeting to look out of the windows.

"Gentlemen — gentlemen!" he remonstrated. "This won't do. This ain't business. We've got to work while we've got the chance. First thing

we know that president of yours'll try buttin' in here again — ”

There was a crash, a splintering of glass, and the lawful president, partially wrapped in an American flag, carrying the greater portion of a window-sash with him, rolled upon the platform. He was on his feet in an instant, pushing away the impeding folds of the flag, and shaking off the sash. A bit of broken glass had cut his forehead as he came through, and the blood trickled in his eyes, half-blinding him.

Confident of a sufficient following to take the meeting by storm, Ackerman advanced upon the usurper.

“ You get out of my chair ! ” he shouted. “ Take your seat on the benches with the others. I'm going to hold this meeting. Pat Cassiday, open the front door ! ”

More than half the men had leaped to their feet. For a moment Patterson's ascendancy tottered; it looked as though the president's side would be the winning side, and that gains always the wavering ones.

But the district organizer was quick-witted. He sprang out of his chair, almost before he had been bidden, and fairly pushed Ackerman into it.

“ Here ! ” he shouted. “ Dempsey — Allgood —

get to the window there. Take my guns. This is business."

Dempsey and Allgood, leaping to the window, looked down upon a scene of disaster. The two men who had heaved their president into the meeting-room crouched on the small roof, with a laughable likeness to terrified fowls on a roost. Below, there was some stir in the dark, but little could now be accomplished since the Patterson faction was warned and on its guard.

"Nothin' doin' here," the sentries called back, jubilantly.

"All right!" shouted Patterson. "Tender 'em my warmest thanks for the president—and keep the others out. Baumgartner! Amos! come hold your respected president in his chair—he may get excited and try to desert us."

Ackerman struggled furiously as the two men pinioned him.

"What the hell do you mean by this monkey business?" he panted. "I've come to run this meeting—and I'll run it. Take your hands off me, you d——d dirty loafers!"

But it soon became evident why the presiding officer was violently detained.

"This is the best thing that could 'a' happened to us!" exclaimed Patterson. "If we'd 'a' held this

meetin' without the president, it wouldn't 'a' been legal — the National Union would 'a' been asking questions. But, bless you, here comes the gent to help us out."

There was a bellow of laughter from the benches, and cries of "That's so! You've got a head on you, Patterson!"

It took Ackerman some minutes to get his wits together, and during that time Patterson was making a very heated appeal to the miners to resort to a strike — to call the men out of the Twin Brothers.

"You've tried everything!" he shouted. "You've tried everything — but a strike. You've gone to that man Strong, and he, seated on his gold, has defied you."

Ackerman gnawed for fully a moment on this surprising description of plain little Mark Strong, in his plain, workaday office; and while he did so, Patterson continued:

"Strong has been a miner like the rest of us. He knows what the work is. He knows what the Union has done for the men, — and is doing. He's all for the Union — outside of the Twin Brothers mine. But you touch his pocket nerve, and he yells. He has said that no committee shall come up out of that mine to talk to him — and when he says that, he says what the Union won't stand for.

If we can't send a committee of honest working men to redress a wrong — immediately — at the time it's happening — our fundamental right to existence is denied us."

The men nodded among themselves, and agreed, more or less noisily, that this was so. Many of them had served on the committee, and the laying down of pick and shovel in the mine gallery, the piling out at so much per hour to lay their grievances before the superintendent, was a prized privilege.

"He needs a lesson. He's got where he thinks he can walk over the men who used to work beside him. He's the only man in the Iroquois district that's holding out against the Union. I call it a dirty, stinking shame — he, a man that used to belong to the Union! He'll be glad enough to see the next committee that comes out of the Twin Brothers, if you men will put and second a motion to declare a strike in that mine this night. Will you? Will you? Will you? Did I hear somebody put that motion? Is there a second?"

There was not only the motion itself — in most irregular form — shouted from many quarters of the room, but a dozen or more seconds. Patterson had forgotten that he was not presiding; he had pushed aside the flimsy pretence that Joe Ackerman was in the chair.

"Vote! Vote! Call the vote, Patterson!" cried several voices.

Ackerman struggled away from those who detained him.

"Men!" he cried, "you're crazy. Don't listen to what this blatherskite says. You've heard him running down Mark Strong, and you know whether it's true or not. You've heard his rotten lies — you've heard him ask you to strike — are you going to do it? For God's sake, think before you go into such a thing! Are you going to do it — are you?"

"Yes, by the Lord, we are!" came back the answer from more than a score of throats.

"Very neatly put, Mr. Ackerman!" smirked Patterson. "Much obliged to you for calling the vote. Well, this is regular — it has been moved and seconded that the men be called out of the Twin Brothers mine, — your president has asked for the vote, and, by God! he's got a standing one by voice."

Ackerman sprang for him, missed him, tipped over the stand on which the lamp was, and went down, tangled in a shred of the flag, which still clung to him. The men at the window had deserted their post, delighted by the spectacle inside the hall. McFadden, who was a stayer, had brought his forces up in better shape; and, as the lamp went

over, ten or fifteen non-strikers seemed to foam into the room through the back window.

"You're done — get out, boys!" yelled Patterson to his adherents, at the same moment setting an excellent example.

"Out with the lights!" shouted Cassiday.

"Stop them fellers at the window!" called some one else.

The bracket lamps on each side of the hall were smashed. A scrimmage or two began in the dark; but as it was impossible to see whether you were hitting friend or foe, the strikers made an effort to get out of the room, and the non-strikers no effort to prevent them. Down-stairs, Patterson leaped upon a barrel in front of the saloon, and cried to the waiting crowd:

"A strike has been declared in the Twin Brothers mine — Joe Ackerman presiding."

At the window above his head appeared a bloody face. A man pushed at the sash, and then struck it on the cross-bar, as he had struck the sash of the back window. It was the president of the Local. Wrapped still in some tatters of the flag, lit by the lights from the street below, into which some one had carried two or three gasoline torches, Ackerman looked down upon the jeering crowd.

"That's a lie!" he shouted. "Patterson and his

men have done the striking, — lay it to them when your children are hungry.”

“We’ll not ask you to feed them — Mark Strong’s little dog Schneider!” shrilled a woman’s voice from the street.

“The Union’ll feed ’em,” harangued Patterson. “The Union’ll stand by you till Mark Strong crawls on his knees to beg you to work in the Twin Brothers. The Union will see that you have your rights — ”

“The Union be d——d!” shouted the president of its local branch — and then paled, as though he had uttered blasphemy.

Behind him a flickering, shaken light arose; the overturned lamps were firing the books and papers upon the table. Ackerman’s figure, heavy, dark, stood outlined against it in the window.

“Yount!” screamed a woman in the street below. “Your — house — is — on — fire!”

For a few moments the strike, the fight in the meeting-hall, were both forgotten. The German saloon-keeper dashed up the stairs, his bartender close after him, carrying fire-extinguishers.

When the blaze was out, Patterson had moved on down the street with his noisy, enthusiastic crowd.

Joe Ackerman went home alone, his head bent, feeling himself a cruel bungler.

CHAPTER VII.

A MORNING CALL

ONE of the sharpest thorns which pierced Jule's heart was the matter of Mark Strong's home — his splendid, ornate, Queen Anne mansion. As soon as Strong became a really rich man — and that was not many years after their separation and her marriage — he laid the foundations of this Queen Anne house on the hillside.

It was the spot where they had planned to make their home when they should be married. There they used to sit under the big sycamore on late summer afternoons, or on moonlit evenings, and go over its details, looking with happy, trustful eyes into that future which Mark's strength and talents were to render splendid, and Jule's sweetness and beauty were to adorn. Now he had bought the place, and begun erecting the home.

Only one person in Iroquois, and that a woman, knew why he built just such a house. It was the plan which he and Jule picked out in a current maga-

zine on one of those never-forgotten summer evenings, as they sat beneath the great tree. Just at the time the building was commenced it fell out that the woman had a few weeks' work in the home of a family who lived over the hill; and every morning and every evening she walked back and forth past Mark Strong's grounds.

As the work went forward, as stone was laid upon stone, and the dignified walls arose above the foundation, who can guess how Jule's heart ached to look at it? Was it a covert sarcasm on her old lover's part? And was he preparing to bring some other woman to it a bride? After Jule came home past Mark Strong's Queen Anne house, she had to sing many songs, to sing them very loud and very cheerfully, before she could eat the bit of supper she had prepared.

When other people asked Strong if he was getting ready for a wife, he answered quietly:

"Why, yes; I suppose I shall be married — sometime; most men do marry sometime; and then the house will be ready; meanwhile, I have got to have some place to live, and this is the home I long ago picked out."

"What on earth are you building that old-fashioned thing for, Strong?" asked young Hansford, the architect. "You might in decency have

given me the job of getting you up designs for a stunning, fine, airy, big Colonial house. It is all the go, now, you know."

"Is it so?" responded Mark, with quiet indifference. And the house on the hillside stood — stood for many things: a sign of Mark Strong's independence for one; for another, his inscrutable habit of being so simple and open that none could be sure of him where he did not wish to be made sure of.

And for what did it stand to Julia Llewellyn? Ah, who can guess?

It was a fine morning in early May; Van Dorn of the Gloriana and his sister had ridden over. They were extremely fond of riding, and the pair of them looked their best in the saddle. Strong had bidden them in to the traditional wine and biscuit — old Celia, Mark's housekeeper, was never visible at this hour. Rumour had it that, like the thrifty woman in Scripture, "she arose while it was yet dark;" but the densest of domestic mysteries usually enveloped her until after the breakfast hour. Therefore the host received his guests alone.

He was not an imposing figure; and yet, for some reason, which perhaps did not reach in its fulness to Jane Van Dorn, he was an endearing one. The very association of power with his gentle, diffi-

dent slenderness was a piquant combination. The Van Dorns stood; and so their host remained standing.

"We haven't a minute," the brother began. "I dragged Jane out of her way to stop here; but — hang it all, Strong! I can't quite afford to come to the mine and talk to you. My men —"

He broke off, and laughed, with a heightened colour.

"Your men are pretty strict with you — aren't they?" inquired Strong, smiling.

"That's what I tell him," broke in the sister, haughtily. "I say that when I can't go where I please, or talk to whom I please — well, it won't be on account of a parcel of dirty workmen, to whom I pay wages."

The speech was an ill-judged one, to Strong, who had himself been a miner. Yet it found him — and left him — absolutely unruffled. Indeed, he appeared to take the keenest interest in what this young person might think of the class to which he had once belonged. He nodded approvingly, but her brother broke out:

"It's all very easy for Jane to talk; but a man in business has got to make concessions."

He caught the other's quiet eye, and laughed awkwardly.

"That is, he's got to make concessions — unless he's Mark Strong. But I came here this morning hoping to argue you into a more complacent frame of mind, for the sake of the rest of us. Hang it all, Strong! You may make your point; I believe you will, if any man can — but will it pay you?"

"I don't know whether or not it will pay me," said the owner of the Twin Brothers, in his usual quiet fashion. "But I think it will pay the Union — I'm working in a missionary spirit," and he flashed them one of his rare, odd smiles, which irradiated his plain face and made it striking while they lasted.

Van Dorn shifted uneasily, and looked annoyed. Strong was too ready to bring up the fact that he had been a miner, and felt with and for his men.

"I don't see how you make that out," said the younger man.

"The Union has got to quit striking, sometime — just as it has begun to quit the boycott; I may as well be the one to show them that they can exist and do their men good without striking, or threatening to strike, or dictating to their employers. I wish I could teach my men a long-time policy, and the value of individual liberty."

Both Van Dorns looked bored, under a simulation of well-bred interest.

"Forget it," counselled the brother. "You'll live longer and die happier if you'll throw those fellows a slovenly, unhandsome chunk of taffy when they come to you with a grouch, do what you must, and avoid what you can help, and rub along with them — that's the way I do."

"I know," said Strong, simply. And for no apparent reason, the other's irritation rose.

Miss Van Dorn had gone to the window, where she stood striking softly against the sill with the loop of her riding-crop.

"Mr. Strong," she began, evidently thinking to save the day with feminine tact, where her brother had blundered, "you make a mistake to fancy that the men in the Unions are all like you. You endow them with your own ability and ideas — and it makes you treat their pretensions with a respect of which they are not worthy."

Strong looked at her with an inscrutable expression.

"I'm pretty well aware that the men in my mine haven't my ideas — or they wouldn't be there. Fortunately for those who wish to own mines, and for the world at large which burns coal, all the men who dig that article are not ambitious."

"None of them are," asserted Van Dorn, thrusting his hands into his pockets. "I tell you, Strong — and I don't need to preface it with an apology, for you are no more like a miner than I am — those men are a grade above the mules they drive — but it's only a grade."

Something kindly and human was withdrawn from Mark Strong's face, as one might take a lamp from the window of a cottage.

"Such an opinion makes you an unfortunate person to handle the men," he commented, dryly.

"It doesn't — it doesn't!" objected Van Dorn. "Look at me. I'm having no trouble. I've made some concessions; in fact, the Gloriana is a Union mine; but — but —"

"It is you who come to me," explained the little man in gray, somewhat wearily. "I supposed you might be having trouble — or anticipating it. I have gone to no one. I'm asking no one to stand with me. I don't deny that I'm aware that I'm setting out upon a long, bitter fight. I trust nothing to the personal liking of my men; because the few who know and like me are not powerful enough to swing matters. These strikes are largely managed from the outside, anyhow. The Central Committee has the say. But I shall make as much

money out of the Twin Brothers this year as any man in the Iroquois district."

He said it with so quiet a confidence in his ability to make good his words, that Van Dorn almost groaned as he replied :

" But, the deuce take it all, man ! I'm not making anything at the Gloriana ; I'm losing ground ; and if your strike stirs my men up, why, I'll be worse off than ever."

Strong smiled as at the vagaries of a child.

" You are not very logical," he commented.

" If the Gloriana isn't making any money," put in Miss Van Dorn, hastily (her brother had let slip this bit of truth inadvertently, in the heat of argument), " I should think you ought to be glad to be shut down."

" Women know nothing about business," retorted Van Dorn, with vague acrimony.

" And some men know less," laughed his sister, as she drew on her riding-gloves. " I'm going down to look at that bit of level there by the trees," she announced to her host. " It would make an admirable tennis-court. You really ought to go in for something of that sort, Mr. Strong ; tennis is a good thing to begin on."

" I'll walk down with you," said Strong.

'And this was why Julia Llewellyn, hurrying home

with a great bundle of sewing, which she had been across the creek to get, had sight of these two coming down the lawn, apparently in earnest and intimate conversation, while Van Dorn lingered on the steps of the mansion, talking to Captain McClintock.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS

AND so the strike in the Twin Brothers was neither on nor off.

"The worst of it is," said Patterson, "that we've got to get Johnny Mitchell down here, and let him say his say, before this thing will be all right and regular."

"Yes, and when you've got Johnny Mitchell, you've got another Joe Ackerman," growled Owen Llewellyn, who had instantly hurried to the Twin Brothers on the hint that he might help in making things worse for its owner. And now he defined his own position in the matter:

"First I have my whack at stoppin' the strike, ye know — stoppin' it! Yes, I'll stop it like blazes! — and then we have to send for Mitchell, or some other guy, and let him see if he can't arbitrate it. But, to my way of thinking, the thing for us to do is to cut Johnny out. I'm trying to scare up some trouble for him in another direction; and if we

can get Billings to come down here in his place, we've got the thing our way. We can make Homer Billings think we've waited too long now."

Patterson nodded. "I'll stay here and hold this job down," he said. "You'll find that strike sentiment will grow in the Twin Brothers."

Llewellyn looked him over.

"You get down into the mine among the men, Bert," he said. "Get Strong to let you down. He ain't afraid of the Union, hang him!"

"That's what I'll do," agreed Patterson. "Oh, I'll get busy, all right."

And in the week that followed, there was not a day that did not see him in the mine caucusing with this bunch of miners or that.

The men were working on their own time; that is, they were paid for the coal they got out, by weight; and so one might have said that Patterson's operations did not concern the superintendent of the mine, other than that, as district organizer, and a man well known to be in favour of a strike in the Twin Brothers at this time, he was a dangerous person to talk to its employes.

Soon half the men in the mine were in a state of sullen, grumbling unrest. They were boiling with petty complaints of all sorts; and Strong had interdicted the committee which lays down its tools to

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go up out of the mine and make these complaints. They neglected their work; and in a mine, neglected work means accident.

The week succeeding the meeting in the hall over Yount's witnessed a train of accidents in the Twin Brothers, more or less ludicrous, and less or more tragic. None of the disasters which occurred there could be traced to malice; all of them might safely be ascribed to that loosening of bonds, that recklessness which men feel who are hesitating before they deal their employer the heaviest blow within their power.

Mark Strong was not a man to keep an incompetent person about him; but it so fell out that this stress of affairs caught him with a superintendent who was a dull fellow and rather inexperienced. The man who had been Strong's right hand in this position had gone into business for himself, and Tawney, the new superintendent, was really on trial; but it would not do to attempt to swap horses while crossing a stream. So Tawney remained, and Strong was tied to the mine closer than ever. He had become, in fact, his own working superintendent.

Under the tremendous pressure, and with all the jar and fret of the next week, his nerves jangled. He discharged men right and left, many of them

those whom he would at any other time have retained, probably reproving, admonishing, or warning them. This fell in excellently with Patterson's plans, and bitter feeling against the little man in gray ran high.

Strong was so savage, so drastic, that even Ackerman came to think — and say — before the two weeks were over, that the Union men had better get out of the Twin Brothers before they were pitched out.

"You're kicking — ain't you? You're mad, and you've got Bert Patterson over here to settle your disputes. What do you pay him for that same?" questioned Strong, bitterly, at the first sign of defection on the big Dutchman's part.

"He gets five dollars a day and his expenses, when there's any trouble on," answered Ackerman, half-sullenly.

"Humph! That's about eight dollars a day — and nice little trips, and the fun of shooting off his mouth at his betters. Why wouldn't he keep you men in trouble, at that rate? I'd do it for you cheaper. What does he want to pacify you — or pacify your employer — and go back to the pick and shovel, for?"

"He's a master hand at argument," maintained Ackerman, doggedly.

"So would I be at more than two hundred per. Say, Ackerman, you can get your quarrelling done cheaper. Try another fellow. Try me."

Joe looked at his employer in angry, stupid amazement; this bitter, gibing manner was something very strange to see in Mark Strong. But after all, Strong was human like themselves; he could not always have patience for both; and they had heaped petty annoyances upon him until he was deeply exasperated.

The Twin Brothers was fitted up in the most progressive manner. All its entries were electric lighted, and furnished with electric haulage; while the mine ventilation had the benefit of a new over-cast, Strong's own device, which came nearer to keeping the air in the rooms fresh than anything in any of the other mines, though considered too expensive by the other owners to put in.

The first mishap began with a monkeyish trick on the part of Bob Llewellyn. A green trapper had been put on at the main air course. A big fan, forty-two inches in diameter and six feet long, pumped the air into the mines during working hours; then when the whistle blew over, and the men were mostly gone, it was reversed to exhaust the mine of the foul air and the powder-smoke, as the shots which had been left prepared were fired.

These were timed to begin exploding at the end of the air, and work in toward the shaft.

Strong had his doors and traps so arranged that he could isolate any part of the mine from air, or could force an extra amount of air in by cutting off most of the other entries.

Ackerman was working in Number One, North, and it chanced that most of the men on his side of the mine were the conservative non-strikers. Bob noted that the boy at the door was a new trapper, stopped beside him as he went down that morning, and gave him some special instructions which concentrated the entire current of air in that portion of the mine where he thought Ackerman might be. Then he went on chuckling, and remarked to his "buddy," as the mate who works in a room with a miner is called:

"I guess I'll wake those dead ones up — you wait till you hear something tear loose!"

It was nearly an hour before the boy got Bob's scheme to working well. At the end of that time Ackerman, with half a dozen others, suddenly came roaring out of a cross-entry, swearing and holding to his hat.

"If I could find the fool that thought such a dirty trick as that was a joke, I'd loosen all his teeth for him!" puffed the president of the Local,

as he leaned against the timbers in a vain attempt to recover his wind.

"I'll bet Tawney blames it on to the Union," suggested Bob Llewellyn, slyly. He had been hidden behind one of the pillars, waiting for the wind-tormented ones to emerge.

"Well, 'twould be natural enough; the Union's a great one for blowing," growled the pit boss. And even Bob's crowd laughed at the apt retort.

As the whistle blew for noon, all the men on the east entries (Patterson had been busy on that side of the mine all day) caught up their dinner-pails, and hastened into the room of the two Bills — Cassiday and Dempsey — who were "buddies" and worked together. It was plainly an arranged meeting; for inside of half an hour nearly all of the men in the Local were represented; and there was a fair sprinkling of those non-Union men whom Patterson had been most active in attempting to induce to join him — it would never do for the Union to take itself out of the Twin Brothers, and yet to leave with Strong enough experienced miners for the mine to even creep along in a crippled fashion.

All the men present had promised to join, and were regarded as already members. A trapper was stationed at the end of the cross-entry, to warn

them of coming interruptions. The men drew together in an irregular circle, opened their dinner-pails, and began to eat while they discussed the situation.

Now Haley Suter, the pit boss, suspecting something, had followed the crowd. The boy on watch gave warning of his approach, and when he entered the room he found the circle sullenly silent.

"Well," the pit boss began, "what you boys up to, bunchin' up like this in one room?"

"I don't see that it's any of your damned business," snarled Patterson. "If the men can't get together socially, at their dinner-hour, why the Twin Brothers is a little too much like the mines of Siberia to suit American ideas."

"Siberia!" snorted Suter. "I reckoned you were sitting here talking about some such devilment."

But the pit boss retired. He knew, as well as Patterson himself, that the man was down there working up a strike; that he was drawing converts to the Union, with a view to having its strength sufficient to make this strike felt; and yet he was helpless in the matter. He had gone to Strong with it over the head of Tawney, the superintendent, and had been told that the vice-president and

general manager of the Twin Brothers wanted the men to have a fair chance at the Union.

"Patterson's not to interfere with the work," Strong said, concisely. "But the men are working on their own time. We weigh the coal, and pay them for what they dig. I don't want a lot of loafing in the mine; but I shall not hinder Mr. Patterson from going down and talking Unionism. If the men want the Union, they can have it. If the Union makes up its mind that it doesn't want me — why, that will be a new issue — we'll meet it when it comes. But I'll never try to suppress Unionism in the Twin Brothers."

"You're right," said the Captain, who had leaned on Strong's desk during this talk with Suter. "Unionism is like measles, you'd better let it come out when it wants to. No use trying to suppress it. I remember when my kids had the measles, and Liza give 'em hot teas and things to bring it out on them. That's the way I'd treat the Union if I was running a mine. I heard a feller tell the other day about a mine in Alabama, where they suppressed the Union. The owners signed an agreement to give the scale as it was paid in that district; and the men signed an agreement not to organize a Local branch until the agreement was out."

Having got so far, the Captain looked across at his employer, inquiringly.

"You think that was a mistake?" asked Strong, to keep the conversational ball rolling.

"I know it was. It was just like tryin' to get a kid to hold the measles in, when he had 'em in his blood. Them men had Unionism in their blood. They signed the agreement all right; and then thirty-seven of 'em got together and organized a Local. The owners didn't do a thing but discharge every last one of 'em. Now that wasn't fair. 'Twas like spanking the kid for breaking out with his measles when he'd promised not to."

"Not fair, wasn't it?" laughed Strong. "I think it was. The men will have to be discharged until they learn to incorporate their Locals. As it is, the owners can only proceed against them individually. Did the Union stand behind those fellows?"

"Not a bit of it," said the Captain, almost ruefully. "The Union said about what you do, that it didn't want any men for members that couldn't keep their agreements. You see the men sorter feel freer and different when they get together in a bunch that way. It doesn't just seem like a plain lie to them then."

And word went forth upon a garbled report of

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this conversation, that Mark Strong was only seeking a pretext to discharge all Union men in the Twin Brothers.

Meantime, Suter departed from the room of the two Bills grumbling. He had walked all day in the footsteps of the district organizer, uneasily aware that Patterson made trouble in more ways than one; now he turned his head for one last apprehensive glance.

To a stranger the scene would have been a striking one. To these men, familiarity had robbed it of its picturesqueness. The light from fifty or sixty small lamps carried in the hats of the miners, cast a flickering glow around the room. It was reflected from thousands of points on the shining face of the coal. The room was about thirty-five feet wide, and had now been driven in about fifty feet from the entry. Dozens of big props upheld the dark, slaty roof; a car, half-loaded with coal, stood near the great pile of lumps which had been blown down the day before.

The men were seated on the fallen coal and on the unused props; no man who had not given his word to join the Union was present; and the more conservative among the Union men even were absent, or held their peace. The lamp-shine flickered on Joe Ackerman's dark, handsome face, where

he sat mute, ground between the upper and nether millstone of Mark Strong and the Union. Patterson did the talking.

"I tell you, men," he said, "the only way to bring a fellow of Strong's stamp to time, is to strike. You can keep on talking to him until he's gray as a rat; as long as he's getting coal out, he ain't going to do a thing for you, but talk. You just let him begin to lose money on his contracts, and he'll get down to business."

"That's right," answered a dozen voices.

"If he thinks he can run this mine without recognizing the Union, now's the time to call his bluff."

Patterson peered about him to see just who was present.

"We've got to root for new members for the Local. It won't do to leave him with enough men to get out any coal. You fellers have got to get busy."

"Ackerman is president of the Local, and McFadden is secretary," broke in a doubtful voice. "You ain't got Ackerman to favour a strike. How do we know that the committee is going to recognize what you and Dempsey and the others done the other night? Ackerman says the old man will come around."

"Come around hell!" growled a disgusted voice from the outer darkness. "When Mark Strong comes around to anything you'll be dead. He ain't the comin' 'round kind. Ackerman ought to know it. Him and me and Ackerman worked in the mines south of here when we was boys. And him and another feller had a fight down in the mine one Saturday. The next Sunday they both of them started to cross a foot-log that went over a crick in the field back of the mine. It was a feller by the name of Dosser the old man had been fighting, and Dosser would have made two of him; but when he seen the big feller start out on that log, he wouldn't go back an inch. Said he was goin' across that log, Jim Dosser or no Jim Dosser. They met in the middle, and Jim thought he'd pick the old man up and carry him back to where he come from — make him look silly like, you know."

The speaker had emerged into the circle of dim light. He looked about upon his auditors. They were deeply interested in the fight of Mark Strong and Jim Dosser. To them it typified the mine owner's imminent difficulty with the Union.

"Well?" prompted one or two.

"Well," the miner chuckled. "The old man would have been easy to lift, if he had wanted to be picked up — but he didn't. He fought so like a

little tiger that they both fell in the water and come near drowning. The old man couldn't swim a lick, but he wasn't thinking about that. He had set his head to cross the log, and as soon as some of the boys pulled him out of the water on the same side he started from, he got up and walked over it."

There was a scattering volley of laughter. The miners, like other men who work hard with their hands, are admirers of pluck and persistence.

"You can see for yourselves," came the district organizer's smooth tones, attempting to make an illustration of the story, "that the only thing to bring a man like that to his senses is a strike."

"You notice he went across the log," said the first doubter.

"I'd hate to see the old man in trouble," somebody else put in; "he's treated us as white as any man could."

"Like hell he has!" the organizer returned, disgustedly. "Is it treating you white to refuse you your rights as Union men?"

"He pays us as much as any Union mine," argued Strong's friend.

"We've got the scale, and what's more, we get all the work we want. There's plenty of them in the Iroquois district that can't say that much. Look at the Gloriana — Van Dorn's men don't work

three days in a week, this summer; even the Culleoka is runnin' down since Kesterson's got old. We get four and five days to the week right through mid-summer."

"And the more reason for a strike," urged Patterson. "A man as prosperous as that, can afford to recognize the Union. With all that business on hand, you can bring him to time in short order. I happen to know that he's got an especially big contract now, that will keep the mine running full time till it's filled. He's got one railroad order for twenty-five cars a day; with what he's using in his washer, he's simply got to have the coal. Now's your chance."

"I guess you ain't real well acquainted with the old man," said the miner who had told the story of the foot-log. "He'd see his contract to the devil before he'd give in, if he thought he was in the right of it. Anyway, all of them contracts, nowadays, reads that he won't have to fill 'em if there's a strike."

"Aw, shut your fool mouth!" broke in a dozen angry voices.

"If that's the way you're goin' to talk, you'd better get out of here," snarled Patterson.

"I don't reckon I will," answered the miner, standing up. And the circle recognized, with a little

shock, that Cassiday was the speaker. "I don't reckon I'll get out of here, bein' as you fellers is in my room. I didn't invite you here, neither — mebbe my buddy did, and if he did, w'y that goes. But let me tell you, Mr. Patterson," walking over to where the organizer perched upon the edge of a coal-car, "you've had a hell of a lot to say about the old man, and what he'd have to do, and what you'd do if you was us; but I don't see you goin' to the old man and tellin' him all these things. Naw, you'd ruther loaf 'round here with a bunch of these damn fools, and try to make trouble for a better man than you'll ever be. You'll try to make him lose money 'cause he's doin' what he thinks is right; and I tell you I'm sick and tired of hearin' you shoot off your mouth. I'm frum Missouri, I am, and you've got to show me. I stood by you, Patterson, up at the hall, and helped you down old Joe Ackerman. And I tell you, fellers, right now, when this meetin' begun I was a good Union man; but in the last half-hour I've made up my mind that whatever comes or goes, I stay with the old man. An' if you don't like the way I'm talking, you can go somewheres else."

Patterson kept his temper admirably. No one doubted his courage; but just now there was a bigger fight on than any mere encounter with fists;

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and he had the loyalty to his cause which keeps the soldier out of private quarrels in time of war.

Cassiday stood by the edge of the car, with one hand upon it, the other resting on his little pick. The big muscles swelled grandly upon his bare arms. His face was flushed and angry. He meant all he said — for the moment — that was Cassiday.

“Let me tell you something, Patterson,” he went on. “There was one time when I talked just the way you are doin’ now. I’d get fuller’n a goat, and then rush up to the office and try to tell the old man how to run this mine. I come down here one morning ’bout half-shot. I never paid no attention to how things looked, and begun pulling down some coal from the face — and the next thing I knowed they was pullin’ ’bout ten tons of slate off o’ me. The old woman was sick then, and I didn’t have no one to wait on me. Did the old man forget that him and me had worked in one mine when we was boys? I’ll bet he didn’t. He come over to my place and set up with me three nights, before he could get a nurse. He ain’t the man to get the big head, and offer one of his old pards a dollar — but he’ll treat him like a friend when the time comes. There ain’t a man in the Twin Brothers that the old man ain’t done some good to. An’ now, you all set around in the rooms of his mine and hatch up plans

to make him lose money, when he's just started in a good way of making, for the first time since he's been manager."

Again and again Patterson had sought to interrupt. Now he broke in.

"You don't understand, Cassiday. This is a matter of principle. I think it's Mr. Strong's policy to keep on the good side of his men. I do him justice. I say he's an honest man — but he's a mighty badly mistaken one. If he thinks all that of you, why does he insult the organization you belong to?"

Cassiday turned with a snort. "I've said all I've got to say," he concluded. "If Dempsey is goin' to have a Union meetin' in here every time the mine blows over for noon, w'y, I'll eat my dinner in the entry. I'll tell you right here, when you go to strikin', you can count me out. When the old man wants me, he can have me, Union or no Union."

Waiting for no reply, he strode out into the entry, past the trapper who was on watch there, and almost to the main entry. Here Patterson overtook him; the district organizer's face was white with fury; he felt that his long morning's work had been undone by the loyalty of the clumsy fool.

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"Cassiday," he panted, "if you don't care nothing about the advancement of your mates, you might at least let alone them that does. I don't want to fight you, but I'll have to if you're going to run 'round in the Twin Brothers and talk the way you done just now."

Cassiday swung about, the Irishman in him stirred to the core by that word "fight."

"Say!" he roared, almost genially, "if you don't want yer face spoiled ye're takin' a mighty funny way with Bill Cassiday."

What more would have happened was cut short by the appearance of the pit boss. Suter came rushing down the main entry, caught Patterson by the coat lapel, and pulled him fully into the larger way.

"Stirring up a fight, are you?" he demanded, in a singularly quiet voice.

Patterson's temper was on a wire edge, and this broke through whatever restraint was left him.

"None of your business," he shouted, and the next instant measured his length on the floor.

Suter started toward the prostrate man, who was getting to his knees, but a dozen restraining hands were on him in an instant, while angry shouts filled the entry.

It would have needed but a straw to set the gang

upon the pit boss. But Patterson was too wise to allow this to happen, with matters in their present shape. He trusted that his time would come, when the strike was finally declared. He got slowly to his feet, looked at Suter, and muttered:

"Haley, you done right. You're boss here, and I'd no business to answer you the way I did. I've got the old man's permission to come down in the Twin Brothers. I don't see that I make you any trouble if I talk to the men out of working hours."

This magnanimity scarcely reached Suter.

"You and the old man for it," he growled. "I s'pose he can send you down there if he's a mind to—you shouldn't go into no mine that I was manager of—"

Upon the instant there arose an infernal din back of the two men.

"What the devil is that, now?" shrilled the weary, exasperated pit boss.

"Sounds like it might be the rest of that hurricane that spit us out of the North Side," said Ackerman, rather grimly. It was the first word he had uttered.

Bob Llewellyn snickered, and brought the Dutchman's glance around in his direction; whereupon he looked preternaturally innocent.

"Something's the matter back there," cried Patterson, and set off running toward the cage. He had not taken a dozen steps before the sound of a furiously struck gong burst out.

"Git! Git! Git! Git to hell out o' here!" yelled the voice of a frightened motorman. "She's runnin' away from me! She's tearin' up the ground. Git! Git! Git! Clear the track! Whoopee!"

They got. Down the lighted tunnel came roaring the runaway motor, with ten or fifteen coal-cars after it; the cars swaying from the unusual speed, lumps of coal bouncing from the loads and striking against the roadway or the timbers. It was plain why the motorman dared not jump.

Near the foot of the shaft came the crash that all were looking for. By a hundredth chance, the motor took the switch into the runway where it was expected to, the trolley pole flying off against the roof of the entry and breaking the current from the machine, which ran perhaps a hundred feet farther into a hickory pole stretched across the entry for a bumper. The force of the shock tore the pole out of its bearings, but stopped the motor without any damage to it.

The heavily-laden cars held straight on, tearing free from the motor, throwing the man with some violence ten or fifteen feet, and then ploughing

ahead to pile up on each other, and jam the roadway until it would be a day's job to clear it for traffic.

The motorman sat up and stared stupidly at his runaway machine.

"You're a hell of a mule," he commented, getting slowly to his feet.

At this moment the trolley-pole, which had swayed and balanced for an instant, dropped over upon an uninsulated light wire, which also carried the current to the coal-cutting machines. There was a snapping, a flare of blue fire, and the entry was in darkness.

"Now what the devil did you do that for?" fiercely demanded the pit boss, stumbling over the coal piles and swearing.

"I didn't do it — it done itself," muttered the motorman.

"Done itself — so does every damn thing that happens in this God-forsaken mine this week. I wish I had some men to get coal out here, and haul it; I'm damned if I ain't tired of trying to run this place with freaks."

Ackerman and half a dozen others now came down the entry, their lamps tossing like fireflies, and making a faint illumination in the pitchy blackness as they climbed over the coal.

"What did Buck do? Is he hurt?" Ackerman called, placidly.

"No. Damn him, he ain't hurt a bit!" roared the pit boss, as though that fact were a personal grievance. "We've had a mule runaway on the North Side, and we've been short-circuited, and we've had everything so far this week but some fool to blow us up with a keg of powder; or a wind shot — I reckon that's about due now. If I knew who the Jonah was in this mine — well — he wouldn't last long," and he looked darkly at Patterson.

"Aw, I ain't around setting up that sort of thing," remonstrated the district organizer.

"No, but you're keeping my men so worked up that they don't know whether they're here or in Kalamzoo. Good Lord — *what's that?*"

There was a shortage of cars to ship in that day, and the pit boss had told the men they would blow over an hour after dinner, so most of them were getting ready to fire their shots. These shots are long holes drilled in the face of the coal from two to three feet in depth. The miner places in this hole what is called a cartridge, or shot, composed of a certain grade of black powder suitable for the kind of coal in which they are working. Usually the companies have their powder made up for them

by some of the large powder companies, and they in turn sell it to the miners.

Occasionally a green or careless hand fails to tamp the powder well in the hole. When he lights the fuse he has placed in the powder, instead of the force of the shot being expended on the coal, it blows out into the room, igniting whatever gas its atmosphere contains, and there comes that fearful, spectacular mischance which miners call a "wind-shot." With a hissing, whistling sound, a stream of fire hurls itself along the roof, to strike against the further wall, and come hurtling back. The thing is soon spent; and an experienced miner will throw himself flat on the floor, burying his face and hands in the loose coal till it is over.

But the wind-shot whose first whistling cough the pit boss had heard, and whose banner of fire now flung its feather edge fairly above their heads, found one man unprepared.

All morning the trapper, a new hand, had listened to Patterson, till he had forgotten where he was and whatever he might have known about taking care of himself in a mine.

As the great stream of fire leaped up, he crouched, and followed it with a frightened gaze.

When it came back it licked the sight from those poor eyes. With an awful scream the boy fell on his face; and a few moments after, the two miners to whom the room belonged were carrying him out.

"He'll never see again," said Dempsey, in a hushed, awed tone.

"'Twas that infernal fire — and I tamped the hole," muttered one of the bearers, penitently.

As the moaning boy was carried past toward the cage, the men skirting the débris of overturned cars and spilled coal as best they might, the pit boss turned savagely to Patterson.

"There goes your work, damn you! Fletcher didn't tamp the hole right, didn't he? And for why? Because you were down here filling his head up with foolishness so he couldn't do his work. That's why I won't have you in the mine. That's why I am goin' to beg the old man to give you no more leave to come down."

Facing the swift tragedy which had befallen, tragedy familiar enough to the miner, but none the less awful for that, Patterson suddenly told the truth. Perhaps he saw it would be found out if he did not.

"The old man didn't say I could come down and

stay," he acknowledged. "He just let me down on an errand — I'll not come again."

And indeed Patterson thought he could conduct his campaign better from the hall over Yount's than in the distraught Twin Brothers.

CHAPTER IX.

THE STRIKE

THE little town lay in the low, rolling hills that flank the Mississippi of the Middle West. There were a few blocks of brick buildings on the one main street, and the usual frame houses of the country village on the side streets. These were occupied by the store owners, the few professional men such a town calls for, and some of the higher officials of the mines around.

The main street ended in the railway station, which was the great focus of activity in Iroquois when there was not a steamer at the landing. Across the tracks was a flouring mill. Standing on the depot platform you could see the head towers of seven mines; and the little river, winding down to join the great one, came past seventeen mines in all, which were included in the Iroquois district.

Looking north, the road climbed by devious ways through the hills, until you mounted the longest one. Here it branched, the left-hand way going to

the Gloriana, and the right-hand track leading to Kesterson's mine, the Culleoka. On the very summit of this hill, at the direct parting of the ways, stood a huge sycamore-tree, which came to have its history; for it stood at the boundary of Mark Strong's land, and there, when troubled times came, ran his dead line, across which no man stepped to enter without his pass, and across which his black men never came. On this tree the notices were posted warning all people to keep off his grounds. And within the enclosure which was behind it, every improvement, roads, electric lights, even the railroad and the trolley line, came finally to belong to Mark Strong.

In Iroquois, the most prosperous places of business were the saloons, and there were nineteen in this town of five thousand inhabitants. On pay-days, most of the checks issued by the companies were cashed across their beer-stained counters; and back across those counters came much of the money which the men earned.

All this before Mark Strong brought in the guests from Alabama. After that, one mine, at least, contributed no support to the saloons in Iroquois. Strong had such liquors as he supposed would be necessary taken out to his place, and sold

to the men at a reasonable rate, and in a place which was rather more like a restaurant than a saloon.

The order of events in the disagreement at the Twin Brothers was now for the district president to intervene and attempt to arbitrate the matter. Owen Llewellyn came to Iroquois with that expressed intention. In fact, he had at last found himself in the position, so long coveted, in which he could speak out his mind to Mark Strong.

He went alone to the owner of the Twin Brothers; he did not want a committee with him, nor even the president of the Local. There were things which had lain heavy on his mind for years, and which he now proposed to delve out and to hurl at Mark Strong, hoping that their weight would at least make them effective missiles.

It was pay-day at the Twin Brothers, when he made his call. The bookkeeper sat at his window with a pile of pay envelopes at his elbow. The men were gathered about the yard in little knots and bunches. Everybody knew that Owen Llewellyn had gone into the boss's private office, and many of them were aware that he carried the papers which authorized him to call the men out of the Twin Brothers if Strong refused to arbitrate.

"Llewellyn ain't the man for the job," said McFadden. "You send Joe Ackerman in there, and

him and the boss would have matters straightened out inside of half an hour."

"Well, then, Llewellyn is the man for the job, if you let me tell it. Send Joe Ackerman to Strong, indeed! The boss would twist Joe around his finger, and send him back to us with everything we asked for refused to us. Aw, Ackerman's no good when you get a sharp fellow like Mark Strong a-holt of him." This from Dempsey.

Meantime, there was more trouble in getting the men of Twin Brothers paid this month than there had been in any year before. They felt that they were going, and most of them meant to make as much trouble as possible before they left.

"That pit boss is the damnedest liar and sneak in the State!" shouted a big Swede, bringing a fist down on a window-ledge. "You yust wait, mister, till I go talk to him once 'bout my time for track-layin'."

This man sent on his way to find and dismember Suter, the pit boss, another raised the cry that he had been overcharged for blacksmithing.

"A ton of coal — what am I charged with a ton of coal for?" snarled the next in line.

"Sent to your house," said the weary man behind the window.

"The hell it was! I ain't had a bushel of coal in

two months. I can bring the old woman here to prove it."

"Lord, no!" protested the bookkeeper. "One of you is enough. You can lie, and she can swear to it. I'm not going over to your house to see the state of your coal pile. Take your money as I give it to you, and move on."

While a couple of men wrangled over the weight which had been given one of them, a small girl, in head-gear which was manifestly her mother's, attempted to bring herself high enough to command the attention of the paymaster. That functionary saw first a battered hat with draggled feathers bobbing about as though upon a troubled sea; then a pair of round eyes and a snub nose appeared beneath it, and a small, frightened voice said:

"Paw's-sick-and-he-says-for-you-to-gimme-the money!"

"What's the name?" inquired the man at the window.

The snub nose and the eyes had gone down; but the hat still rode at uneasy anchor. "Paw-says-you-gotter-give-it-tumme," came doggedly from beneath the millinery.

"What's your father's name?" the clerk again questioned of the hat crown.

"His-name's-John, - and - he - says - you - gotter gimme-the-money."

"'Tis Reagan's gurrel," supplied Dempsey, leaving his own grievances to relieve a situation which was becoming strained.

A half-dozen quiet men, who accepted their envelopes without a word and walked quickly out of the yard, were next disposed of. These belonged to the non-striking faction, once a majority in the Twin Brothers, but now, thanks to Patterson's efforts, become a minority.

Inside the office, Llewellyn had ceased to talk of the strike, and was devoting his attention to matters more personal; the questions brought up between the Union and the manager of the Twin Brothers had been gone through in an almost perfunctory fashion, Llewellyn merely snarling at each statement the other made, each new opinion he expressed.

"Offered them a club-house, did you? Well, I call that an insult; when men come to you for justice, and bread for their children, you offer them a club-house — a damned club-house!"

Strong had prepared himself for this interview, and held, all through it, a calm most irritating to his antagonist.

"I didn't offer them a damned club-house," he

amended. "I think my statement was that it should be as good a building as any for its purpose this side of Chicago. I believe in giving men what they want. Old man Kesterson, over at the Culleoka, gives 'em a swimming-bath and a library, and then feels injured because they won't bathe nor read his books. I used to belong to the Mine Workers' Union, you know, Llewellyn, and I offered them what I thought might come in handy."

Llewellyn glanced across the table. He was a choleric man, with no little of that inflammable temper which had made a brute of his brother.

"Well, there's no use for you and me to talk," he concluded; "we can't agree; and the more we talk, the more we can't agree."

"That's about so," said the mine owner, "and that being the case, we are wasting time. I have some important matters to which I might be devoting my attention, if this is all."

He spoke brusquely, quietly. There was not the least hint of that distress, that weakening, which the other had fatuously hoped to see. The district president arose in a fury. He had the sensation of a person who has been summarily dismissed.

"All!" he shouted. "Yes — and enough, too! Mark Strong, there are some people that can't stand prosperity. There are some folks that get the big

head when they've got one dollar to rub against another. When I look at you, and think of them that have stood your friend, and — that have stood your friend — ”

He broke off. Unfortunately, he had glanced at the owner of the Twin Brothers when he made this last remark, and something in that quiet eye stilled him.

“ Well? ” prompted Strong.

There was silence.

“ When you look at me and think of friends who have been faithful to me,” he repeated, “ what happens then? Have I been unfaithful to my friends? ”

“ Yes, by God! ” said the big man, towering over the other, but keeping his gaze consciously averted. “ You've got the sneaking hope to climb up among men that feel themselves your betters. I reckon you're fixing to marry — to marry — ”

His voice faltered, and trailed helplessly. He took his courage in both hands, and growled out :

“ Everybody says you're trying to marry Van Dorn's sister.”

The little man in gray was on his feet.

“ Now, Owen,” he said, softly, “ I give you just one minute to get out of my office before you're thrown out. You're not talking mine matters. You know you've no business with what you're med-

dling in now. Get out peaceably, and I'll say no more about it."

Llewellyn was no coward or bully; yet his quarrel was so unjust, he knew so well himself that he had no right to trench upon Strong's private affairs, that he dared not risk an open rupture.

"Lord! did you think I'd stay? You knew I was goin'. One minute to go in! You're liberal — I don't want two seconds."

With a black look he strode out of the room. As he flung himself from the door of Strong's office, and paused on the step overlooking the yard, every eye was upon him. The groups broke up; men left their seats upon the piles of timber, to hurry forward and hear what the district president had to say.

Instinctively his hand went to his breast pocket, closed over the papers there, and drew them forth. He had been made to appear like a brute and a blackguard in Strong's office. Well, here was his answer. He had not struck the little man with his fist — but he would strike him with this.

"I've got the papers from the Central Committee," he cried, "authorizing me to call the men out of the Twin Brothers if Strong refuses to arbitrate!"

He was silent so long after this that Ackerman took heart.

"Well, Owen, out with it. What did the boss say? He didn't refuse you. He sure would arbitrate."

"Say!" snarled Llewellyn. "What'd he say? He talked to me like a dog. If he'd been a man of my size, I'd 've broke his damn neck for him. Arbitrate—hell! You got nothing to expect from Strong."

"The strike's on—the men are called out of this mine!" shouted Patterson, excitedly.

Llewellyn turned to walk away, when he was confronted by an old man in a somewhat worn G. A. R. suit. It was Strong's new farm boss.

"Was you looking for a man of your own size, so that you could break somebody's neck?" he asked, gently.

"Now g'wan off," snorted Llewellyn, full of the immediate triumph of having just declared a strike in the Twin Brothers, and bitter from his recent defeat in the office of its owner. "You get out of the way, Mc. I ain't got any row with you."

"Ain't you?" inquired the Captain, mildly. "Well, I've got the hottest old row with you," and he launched himself full upon the Welshman.

The men went down together, in the black dust of the roadway, rolling over and over, hammering savagely at each other. But there were numerous

and willing hands to part them; and the only result of McClintock's defence of his employer was that he was added to those whom Owen Llewellyn hated for Mark Strong's sake.

CHAPTER X.

MARK STRONG'S DEAD - LINE

"MARK," Ackerman had urged on one of those occasions when he unsuccessfully laid the case of the Union before the owner of the Twin Brothers, "Mark, if two men apply for a place in your mine, and they're equally good, you're bound to prefer the non-Union man."

"Why, Ackerman?" Strong had asked him.

"It isn't human nature for you not to want to keep as many non-Union men as you can in the Twin Brothers, in case the Union should order a strike. If it did, and you had, say, half a force of outsiders, you could run on without us."

Strong had laughed at the Dutchman, but very kindly.

"That's just the point I make, Joey, about this business of striking. It makes your employers unwilling to be in your hands. You've got a strangle hold on them if the mine is unionized and every man in it belongs to the Local. But I'll say this

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to you, and you'll believe me, because you know I don't lie: I have never hired a non-Union man yet for any reason but because he was better than the Union man whom I could get to fill his place. I let your organizers go into the Twin Brothers and make all the converts they can. And, it's true, as I tell you, I have given the preference to the Union, and only hired non-Union men when they were actually better — better men, better miners."

This was so true that when the Mine Workers' Union called its men out of the Twin Brothers, there remained with Strong, out of the three hundred he employed when the mine was running full, just thirty men. But these thirty were, as he had asserted, picked men. They stood by him in this time of trouble, and brought in a few others, among their relatives and families, to assist, so that the Twin Brothers crept along, on broken wing it is true, but the mine was never closed, and the contracts were being filled — to the infinite chagrin of the strikers.

Strong was making every effort to add to his diminished forces. The Union, pursuing its usual tactics, discouraged men from hiring at the Twin Brothers. The faithful thirty, also, began to have trouble. Those who stood staunch, who showed no indications of uniting with the Local and joining

the strike, began to find it increasingly hard to make such purchases in Iroquois as they desired. The merchant was out of the goods they wanted, or he gave them a timid hint that his trade was with Union men, and that the sight of their faces in his store was bad for business.

Strong undertook negotiations with a merchant whom he had picked out as a suitable person, and with whom the bulk of the Twin Brothers' trading had been done heretofore.

"But, Mr. Strong," the man replied, "my trade isn't altogether with your men. What can I expect if I go against every customer I have?"

"What can you expect? Why, I'm going to fill the mine with a new set of men, and if you'll stand by me, your store will have a new set of customers — that's what you can expect," Mark Strong answered, a little sharply.

The man behind the counter scratched his head, and looked doubtful.

"If you whip the Mine Workers' Union, Mr. Strong, you'll be the first that's done it — you know that, don't you?"

"There has to be a first one, Hubbard; why not me as well as some one else?"

"I don't know about there having to be a first one," the storekeeper demurred. "Nobody's told

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me yet that the Mine Workers' Union has to be whipped. Maybe it'll whip you out — and then where would I be?"

A tinge of colour rose in Mark's face.

"I see — I see," he said. "You're pinning your faith to the stronger antagonist. You're picking a winner. Well, you're making a mistake. I would have brought in a good class of non-Union men, paid them well, and you could have had all their trade. You say no — you are afraid. Well, I've no choice now but to bring in negroes from the far South, and go the thing alone. And I'll build a store — since I've got to build one at all — twice the size of the one you have here."

He glanced about him. "Yes," he concluded, "it'll take about twice this space to hold what I want to put in. I'm going to run a store as I've always run the Twin Brothers. I'll have the best one in the neighbourhood."

The instinct of the merchant got the better of Hubbard's Yankee caution.

"Them niggers won't appreciate that sort of thing. You put up some sort of a shack, Mr. Strong, and I'll find a way to supply you with goods till I — till you —"

The owner of the Twin Brothers laughed out suddenly.

"Till you see whether I make a go of it! Well, you're a cool one. No. I don't do business that way. I didn't make my success that way. I'll put in the best store hereabout, and I'll sell goods at a fair price."

This last was a side hit at some extortionate practices which the mine owner had always deprecated in his merchant. Hubbard followed the little man in gray to the door with an uneasy face.

"I'm sure sorry I can't accommodate you, Mr. Strong," he repeated. "I wish I could. I wish I could see my way to do exactly what you want me to. But you understand the men in the other mines deal here. I get lots of trade from the Gloriana. They would all be down on me. I'd have to be held harmless for that trade as well as for the trade I get from the Twin Brothers."

"That's all right," said Strong, pleasantly. "I've made my offer, and you don't care to take up with it. I'm not angry. I didn't shake the new store at you as a threat; for if I'm any judge of matters, it'll have to be on my own property — this store of mine will — and nobody but my own employés would be willing to trade there. I understand that I'm to be treated as a case of smallpox from this on."

He looked so slight, and so dauntless, as he stood,

thin and worn, but smiling, in the pleasant autumn sunlight, that even Hubbard's leathery old heart was moved.

"A case of smallpox," he repeated. "Look out that you don't die of that kind of smallpox, Mr. Strong. The Union will only just boycott you now, and annoy you every way they can. But when they see you about to win, when they think they're liable to be whipped — it'll be your life they'll be after then — and you know it."

He ended in a whisper with his hand on the other's shoulder.

"Sure," agreed Strong, cheerfully. "That's what I'm going in for. That's what I expect. Nothing else. This is war, Mr. Hubbard; it's no less a war because it's so quiet — indeed, it's that bitterest and deadliest of all — a factional fight; and a soldier who has scruples about risking his life oughtn't to enlist at all."

This was the last proposition or suggestion that Mark Strong made to anybody in Iroquois. Thereafter he fought out the campaign alone, with only the old Captain to give him personal sympathy and support, meeting the defection of his farmers even, and buying a razor when he found that every barber in town refused to shave him.

"I tell you, Mark, you'd better get you a com-

pany or two of militia camped out there on them slopes before you stir a peg. It'll save trouble an' lives an' layin' awake nights," the Captain counselled, when Strong finally made his decision to bring in negro miners from Alabama. And upon every hand the owner of the Twin Brothers was warned that military protection would be indispensable.

"I'll not do it," Strong flung out, sharply. "I have my own plan. I'll not set some d——d whey-faced fellow who has been refused credit by some of our folks across the counter, or some chap whose garden has been destroyed by some of my men's chickens, to paying out neighbourhood spites, with a uniform on."

"I don't see what you'll do, Strong," McClintock urged, with a discouraged shake of the head. "You can't get United States troops — and the milish ain't so bad. I admit what you say about it's going blamed hard for men to be ordered around by the fellers they've taken drinks with and chummed with for years; but I don't see how you can help it. Lord, I wish we had the old Twenty-Ninth here — and it was State troops when it began life — we'd keep things in order without no frills."

"I'm going to come as near that as I can," Strong told him. "The first hundred negroes who

come in here won't be set to work in the mines for a month. You'll plan a good parade-ground and camp, up there on the slope, and you'll have whoever you want to help you drill 'em. They tell me those darkies take to drill like a duck to water. I'm buying the uniforms, and I've got a plan to have them sworn in as special officers. They'll be my milish — my own milish. Don't you see, Mc., the strikers are bound to feel that these men have some right to be fighting them. It won't scald like it does to have Tom, Dick, and Harry — fellows whose cats or goats or dogs have had ructions with our people's cats and goats and dogs — fellows picked up on the streets of their own town, and put in uniforms to stand over them. Anyhow, it's what I'm going to try."

McClintock warmed to the plan.

"Say, Strong, you have a good band — mind that. Music goes a long way in encouraging men to fight, and overawing the fellows you're fighting."

Strong laughed.

"That's the first cheerful word I've heard out of your head for two weeks," he said. "I tell you, McClintock, it goes against my grain to see my own men turned out and these darkies brought in. I don't know anything about 'em — I suppose they're well enough, where they belong; but I've

got an abiding belief that they don't belong in the Twin Brothers, and I need all the encouragement I can get to hold me level in bringing 'em there. Once I place 'em — once they're my men — and I'll fight for 'em all right; but just now I," — he halted a moment — "Mc., I feel sick."

The Captain was deeply touched at this tacit appeal for sympathy — for comprehension and help; and mortally ashamed of his recent appearance of discouragement and weakening.

"Course you do!" he cried, heartily. "It's a sort of sickenin' thing to have to do. But as long as they've shoved it on to us, we'll do it up right. And another thing: the better we do it, the sooner the Union's going to git a plenty of it, and come back to you on your own terms — the only reasonable terms."

Strong had a thousand acres of ground; it contained some fine farming land; he had thought his campaign out exhaustively, going into every detail, facing and providing for every possible exigency. His intention was to surround this tract with a dead-line; to create within it a little world of his own, out of which his miners need not — should not — go; into which, without his permission, none dare come. For this purpose, he utilized the mountains of old condemned timbers which

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accumulate about a mine. With them, and a few tons of barbed wire, he set a mark about the exposed boundaries of his tract; and this barrier he purposed to sentry in times of trouble.

Inside was the store, a great ramshackle building, which took less than four weeks to put up. It contained everything that a miner could desire, and much more than most miners have ever seen. There were rough wooden counters, and rougher wooden shelves; but upon the one was laid, and across the other was vended, a stock of goods the like of which had never been brought into Iroquois. The grocery department was managed by an experienced man; the goods were of the best, and the prices (which would have made Van Dorn's or Kesterson's miners open their eyes) were such as Strong had found he could afford where he desired to make no profit. In the butcher-shop the best of meats were sold; farm products, hardware, everything that people could want who were preparing for a siege, he assembled under this one roof.

The band and the drill were to be great features of the little world at the Twin Brothers. Strong had had a band-stand constructed as soon as he found how well his musicians could perform, and how eagerly and enthusiastically they took to the practising. The parade-ground was McClintock's pride;

could he only have drilled white soldiers upon it, he would have been completely content.

"No use fixin' up them cottages," the old man had said; "niggers is used to livin' in log cabins where you can sling a cat through the roof." He had gathered his ideas during the years of the Civil War.

"I'm going to give them as good as the white men had," Strong said; "and better, as soon as they show that they want it."

One day, passing the foot of her old lover's lawn, on her way to Mrs. Kesterson's, Julia saw the little man in gray out superintending the work of a gang of negroes. He was putting his famous fence in place. He left the labourers, to walk beside her for a little way.

"I'm gathering my clans," he said, "to stand the siege. Perhaps you'd better hold any last conversation that you want to with me; for in about two months, when I get my negroes in from Alabama, you'll not be willing to be seen talking to me."

"That'll be a strange day," smiled Julia, "when I'm ashamed to be seen talking to Mark Strong."

"Stranger days have been," persisted the little man in gray.

She was silent for a long time; then she began, very gently:

"I had hoped that your trouble with the Union would be fixed up long ago. Are you really going to ship in negroes from the South?"

"I'm going to make use of what I can get," Strong said, defensively. "I owe it to my stockholders to make the Twin Brothers pay. I owe it to myself to run any mine that I set out to run, in my own way. Yes, Julia, I'm going to bring the negroes in. I'm going to make a little world of my own here. We won't come across the line to trouble other people; and other people would better not come across the line to trouble us. I shall make a success of it. I do not like the job; but I shall make a success of it."

Julia looked at him, and was sure that he would succeed. Her heart sank.

"You know, Mark," she began, hesitatingly, "I go about among the people, and I see, as you cannot, the good the Union has done. Why do you fight it?"

"I do not fight it," objected Strong. "It fights me. You're mistaken when you say I don't know the good the Union has done and is doing. But I know when it gets out of its place and needs a whipping. I am only one man, and not a very big man at that; but I propose to give it that whipping."

She eyed him wistfully and covertly; his face looked hard and cold now; she wondered he had cared to talk to her. As they came to the turn in the path where her way crossed a small brook, she put out her hand.

"You're going to build a town of your own," she said; "and I will be moving away, I expect. I don't know where I'll go, yet. Bob has had a prospect of work at one or two other places; but we thought — I hoped — well, good-bye."

The mention of Bob brought added sternness to Strong's features. He had been ready to ask Julia if she did not care to ally herself with his faction. When he turned to walk with her, it had been in his mind that he must have a school inside his stockade; that there must be a teacher; that there would be room for various positions which she might fill. But, after all, what could he hope? She was the mother of that young hound who, more than once, had made an attempt upon his life. No, he had not the heart to try to include her in the little world he was now building. There must be nobody within the lines but those who were staunch.

"Good-bye," he said, taking her hand. "It seems as though we were preparing to live in different countries. I guess we are. Good-bye, Julia."

The first month of preparation at the Twin

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Brothers brought Van Dorn up to investigate its possibilities.

"They'll probably send a committee to me tomorrow to try to dock me a month's salary for sneaking away and coming over here," he said, jocularly; "but my curiosity overcame me, and I played hookey, and just ran the risk."

The Captain was escorting him about with considerable pride.

"You just wait till my squad turns out for drill, and I'll show you as well set-up men as ever were enlisted in the U. S. Army," he boasted. "I tell you it's wonderful. These fellows are natural soldiers—they've got the instinct of obedience that's the foundation-stone of military discipline. I know. I used to see 'em during the latter years of the Civil War."

There came a flare of music down the neatly-kept parade-ground, and then the thud of marching feet, and Strong's Guard whirled into the open space. The Captain stepped forward to put them through the simple manual which he used. Their movements were timed to a precision quite wonderful considering how recently they had begun to drill.

Van Dorn gazed at them from under heavy brows.

"Fine-looking animals," he commented to the

little man in gray, who stood beside him. "Now if a fellow owned them, as they used to in the South, he might make something in the mining business."

Strong shook his head, laughingly.

"I should ask to be excused," he protested. "Hiring miners is as fierce a job as I want to tackle; if I owned about three hundred of them I should go cut my throat."

Van Dorn shrugged, and raised his brows.

"I always thought I should like to own slaves. My mother's people owned big cotton lands; I can just remember going with her, as a kid of five or six, to visit grandfather, on the great plantation. If the war hadn't ruined them, I probably shouldn't be running the Gloriana to-day."

"Come over and see the foundations we're putting in for the new washer," said Strong. "I found about a dozen good stone-masons among the negroes. They have a natural bent for constructive work, and I'm going to be able to use them, since the Carpenters' Union and the Stone Cutters' Union have got me on their list."

"That's the deuce of it, Strong," Van Dorn protested, in his faithless, skeptic, half-hearted fashion. "That's where the hard part comes in; you'll find it cropping up everywhere. Every little three-penny Union will boycott you; there'll be a hun-

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dred annoyances that you haven't prepared yourself for."

"Think so?" asked Strong. "Well, I am inclined to believe that I have prepared myself for anything that may come. You know I'm not new to this sort of thing."

Van Dorn laughed, ruefully. "Hang it all, man, you have such a competent air; you put the rest of us to shame. But say you make a success of this, what then? Are you going to live your days out in a state of siege? I couldn't do that, you know, I have a family; they couldn't comfortably stay inside of my dead-line, and I shouldn't want them to be outside while I was in. I have a liking for some social existence; you realize what you're cutting yourself off from?"

"I could not be ungracious enough to Mrs. Van Dorn to suggest that a bachelor has any privileges which a married man might envy," smiled Strong; "but I will say that this thing is war; you have called it a siege; well, then, a soldier has no business with a wife. Yet, if I had one — yes, I think she would live inside the dead-line with me — I think she would have to help me stand the siege. I confess that Mrs. Graves is a failing prop. Perhaps, as you suggest, I am better off without women-folks, under these circumstances."

CHAPTER XI.

THE GUESTS FROM ALABAMA

IROQUOIS will never forget the day that brought the negro miners into it, marched them through its streets and out to the Twin Brothers' spur-track. They came in singing — poor exiles — plantation songs that were strange to the ears of the Middle West, and would, under any other circumstances, have been eagerly admired.

After Strong evinced his determination to bring in negroes, and made the first move by hiring and training the squad of special officers, his troubles with the allied trades really began. Finally, no engineer or fireman could be found to drive the engine which hauled cars of coal on the spur-line that ran to the Twin Brothers. So the engineer's place was supplied by a young fellow from the Boston Polytechnic Institute, a chap who could have built a locomotive, who made shift to run one on theory, and did run it till he learned to do so by practical experience. A man from the mine fired

for him, and not one day was lost through failure to move the cars.

But when everything was finally in readiness to receive the guests from Alabama, the proprietor of the Twin Brothers found but one railway which would bring them in, and this road refused to have its cars switched on to the Twin Brothers spur and hauled out to the mine. The hitch came at the last moment, and was no doubt contrived by the strikers, who thought Strong would be afraid to unload the blacks in Iroquois. But the little man in gray had considered this possibility, as well as some others which he was not called on to face; and the crisis found him prepared.

Strong's m'lish, as his negro company was called, stood in uniformed ranks to make a way down which the newcomers would march. The Captain, white and nervous, hovered on the outskirts, divided between pride in the men's neat, martial appearance, and helpless disgust at their colour — their race.

"Play — play! For God's sake, why doesn't that band play?" he demanded, peevishly; and the ready musicians struck up a wailing camp-meeting hymn of which they were extremely fond.

Instantly a hundred deep, sonorous basses and

golden tenors, such voices as Africa is always giving us, took up the strain :

“ Oh, Joseph begged his body, and laid it in the tomb,
Oh, Joseph begged his body, and laid it in the tomb,
Oh, Joseph begged his body, and laid it in the tomb,
And the Lord — will bear — my spir — it — home ! ”

“ Great Scott ! — not that thing ! ” growled the impatient Captain. And the air was changed to “ America.”

Up the street they went, moving in lock-step, two and two.

“ Plenty of them fellers been in the mines down South — convicts. Look at ’em slouch. Look at ’em fall into that lock-step — oh, they’re a sweet-scented lot ! ” And the Captain groaned.

Door and window were crowded, curb and the open way of every crossing lined with white faces ; the striking miners, their wives and children, their sympathizers, standing to see the men brought in who should take their places, live in their cabins, and swing the pick in those rooms of the Twin Brothers, where they had but now made better wages than any miners of the Iroquois district.

Not a soul but half-hearted old McClintock, or the new clerical force from Chicago, was there to stand with the little man in gray. His fellow mine

owners of the district were, of course, obliged to hold rigidly aloof from an experiment whose success or failure they watched with the keenest interest, and in which all their sympathies were actually upon his side.

It is a powerful soul which can breathe the bleak air of these lonely pinnacles, and hold to its purpose.

Back of the ranks of men, humbly following, bundles in hand, — and, strangest of all to Northern eyes, great packets of bedding upon their heads, — came the women, with the small black children trotting at their sides, and sometimes a baby riding on hip or arm. It was noticeable that the offspring of this inferior race did not give tongue to its distress as white children would have done; the small blacks marched mutely, sometimes knuckling their eyes, but rarely raising their voices. Altogether, it was rather a desolate procession, and a piteously trustful one.

Something in the appearance of the black wives and children must have roused the rage of some white woman among the spectators, for a high, female voice shrilled:

“Ah-h-h! look at 'em! the nasty, black brutes! comin' in to take the bread from our children's mouths!”

The Captain whirled and caught the virago by

the shoulder, clapping an effective palm over her face. It was the only argument for which there would have been time; and it proved effective. He pushed her into a stairway, adjuring her in no gentle tones to "Shut up!"

When he had set her, somewhat bewildered, but quite ready to shriek again, on the steps (while his men were getting away from him), he glanced to the door, saw that there was a key in it, stepped out, pulled it to after him, and coolly locked her in.

"I never saw a dirty, howling mob yet," he said, "that some woman didn't start. And nine times out of ten she opens up by yelling about bread for her children."

They walked along — unmolested now, and amid silence. McClintock added:

"As a matter of fact, the big wages are mostly spent over the bars; the more pay, the more beer and whiskey. But when it comes to strikes, and bellowing mobs, the cry is always, 'Bread! Bread for our children!'"

"Where was it you put her?" asked the new weigh-master from Chicago.

"Durned if I know," returned the Captain. "And I've got the key to their door — whoever they are." He cast a bit of metal from him into the middle of the roadway.

"I guess you're about right," the other observed. "She seems to have started it," and he pointed to where one of the negroes held a big black hand over a bleeding mouth. The man was uttering no sound, but his eyes rolled and showed the white wildly.

"Somebody threw a stone at him about the time your woman raised the yell," explained a quiet voice at McClintock's other elbow.

As the last coal flat rattled away with its dusky human freight, guarded by the proud wearers of Strong's uniforms, the little man in gray heaved a great sigh of relief, and turned to the shabby single buggy and the old mare with the young gaits.

"Won't you come out to the house and take supper, Captain McClintock?" he said. "I have a little matter that I want to talk over with you; and Aunt Beck will be glad to see some one from outside."

The Aunt Beck to whom Strong referred was his mother's youngest sister. A tall, thin, Scotch woman, with a reproving visage, she had been the wife of a druggist in a small place, was now a widow, and had come, the year after the Queen Anne mansion was completed, to keep house for Strong.

It was plain that the negroes lay like an incubus

on the spirit of the owner of the Twin Brothers; and his aunt, who had been over at the mine to see them unloaded and disposed in the company houses, expressed her opinion of the appearance of the women with great freedom, by way of entertaining the supper-table. So wearing did the good lady's talk become, that the Captain finally assumed the burden of conversation, as a means of edging her out of it.

Captain Hiram McClintock had twice been sheriff of the county. He was a man with a war record in which he might justly take pride, and a queer, dry old stick, who was well loved by the few people whom he admitted to intimacy. The Captain had had his troubles. His wife and three children died in one week during an epidemic of diphtheria which swept the little mining town, before Mark Strong, coöperating with the Miners' Union, forced the other mine owners to assist in sewerage the village. Now he faced Strong quizzically, as the proposition came to attach himself personally to that gentleman as an assistant.

"My friends want me to get a bruiser down from Chicago, have him sworn in as a special officer, and take him around everywhere with me. Well, they may have some such demonstration as that at

my funeral — but they won't have anything of that sort while my head's hot — ”

“ What would be the use of having such a man about when you were already dead? ” interrupted Mrs. Graves. She was one of the women without the saving salt of a sense of humour.

“ Yet I do need a good man, ” Strong went on, paying no attention whatever to the unmeaning question, “ one I can trust to be right at hand — to second me — to take a message for me. If I get into any mix-ups, why, I'll get out the way I got in, but you can see about what's wanted, McClintock — what do you think of it? ”

“ I think it's all right, ” the old man answered. “ It suits me to a t-y-ty. There seems to be mostly jaw work in it — and that's what I'm great on. If they get to coming for you too fierce, you'll have to fix me up a room out here at the house. ”

“ That's what I intended to propose. It's coming and going between the place and town that my friends think I need you most. Aunt Beck would like me to stay inside my own property, and send you into town, I think. She's getting pretty flighty. Well, I don't blame her, I'd run away myself, if it wasn't that I've got no place to run. ”

The men laughed together, wholesomely, while the lady in question regarded them with alien eyes;

they understood each other's dry jokes without explanation.

"We've lost three or four servants, one after another; that makes it harder on Aunt Beck," Strong pursued. "You and I may have to do our own cooking before we're done with it."

McClintock nodded. "That part of it would be all right," he agreed, "but I wanted to make my arrangements — as to a room — prior to, and before my walkin' in on you out here; for you can't most always tell what's goin' to happen when you get to buttin' in on another feller's place."

"No need for any preparation," said Mrs. Graves, with a good housekeeper's pride; "I could give you the folding bed in the sitting-room any night."

"A folding bed," echoed the Captain, meditatively. "Um-m — a folding bed."

He glanced at his employer's weary face, then looked with perfect comprehension at the long drab countenance of the lady behind the tea-urn.

"Just the mention of a folding bed makes me think of the time Bill and Jim Maguire stopped at my house after they'd been on a blind bat for about a week."

The Captain passed his cup to be refilled.

"Mighty fine tea," he observed, "and just the

strength I like," he added, by way of placating the mistress of the house.

"Bill Maguire — Jim Maguire," repeated Strong, "they'd have been the best men in the Twin Brothers if they'd let drink alone. Now they're high tycoons with the strikers."

The Captain nodded. "I was a family man in them days," he went on; "and them fool boys got to thinkin' that every time they went broke and had nowhere else to go, they'd just butt into my place, an' crawl in. My wife thought it was all right for a time or two; she belonged to the W. C. T. U., and had notions of reformin' 'em. But they always came in so blamed drunk that they reformed in three minutes and were asleep in two; so she got tired of tryin'. Also and moreover, I got tired of bein' pulled out of my bed and made to hunt up cots and blankets for 'em, at all hours of the night."

Strong smiled; one of the Captain's recommendations as a housemate was his story-telling habit; it might be relied upon to beguile some tedious evenings at the big Queen Anne house.

"After the Mrs. got down on 'em, I warned the boys, an' kep' tellin' 'em they'd get enough of it some day; cause I wouldn't have liked that house myself if 'Liza had been down on me. Well, we hadn't seen anything of 'em for a spell; but my

wife she got one o' these highfalutin jack-knife beds when she was in Chicago, so's to make a spare room out of the settin'-room — you know the animal?"

Strong nodded and laughed. "Folding beds vary some," he assented; "I know the sort you mean; but I believe this one we have is pretty reliable."

"I don't doubt it, ma'am," said the Captain to Mrs. Graves. "Well, this one the Mrs. got was the sort that kinder bends double in the middle, and you can fold her up till she looks like a piano; then you can pull her down, unhook her, stretch the foot hinge about half-way down the middle — you know — and then break her loose somewhere else an' unroll the blankets. This instrumentality was set up in the settin'-room for about a week when Bill and Jim turned out on another tear — they always spread together — funny for brothers, wasn't it?"

Strong admitted suitably that this was a peculiar fraternal pastime.

"'Long about four o'clock one mornin' they come poundin' at my side door, and kept going till I had to get up an' let 'em in. It was mighty cold; an old brindled tom-cat of 'Liza's had been huntin' some warm place to sleep; and, unbeknownst to me, he had burrowed down under the bedclothes in the new

contraption, an' was takin' life as easy as if 'twas a hot brick. As I say, I got up an' let the boys in, though Liza told me not to, for I knew they'd stand there and yell till I did. They'd made up their minds they was goin' to sleep at my house — an' when men as drunk as they were get their minds made up, that settles it.

“ ‘Let them dirty brutes go back to the saloon where they got their vile poison,’ says ‘Liza — or some such pleasant speech, just as I was gettin’ the door open; and when I felt the wind on my legs I was inclined to agree with her. But them trifling boys just pushed past me and made for the settin’-room. Now, the old lady was sleeping up-stairs with the kids, and had left me alone down there to enjoy the new jack-knife bed. They seen it, and they went fer it; ‘Liza up-stairs, all the time making remarks about drunken miners, and folks that didn’t have any more respect for their families than to let such into their house. She wasn’t whispering, neither; and between ‘em both I could have chewed a tenpenny nail in two.”

Mrs. Graves looked with hostile glance at the two smiling men; evidently her sympathies were all with ‘Liza.

“ Bill and Jim sort of halted when they saw the new kind of bed. Then they got funny, and asked

if 'Liza folded me up in it when I didn't behave. Jim reached around after he had crawled in between the sheets, without pullin' off anything but his coat and boots, and picked a book off the shelf.

" 'Ha!' he says. 'This is what I call scrumptious. Man can improve his mind while he rests. Say, it must be handy to have these nice story-books on top of your patent self-oiling cage!'

" 'Bout this time 'Liza came to the head of the stairs and called down to know when I was goin' to get them there drunken tramps gone. Tell you I was plumb mad.

" 'I'd just got my cot fixed, and laid down, when I heard Jim tell Bill to roll over, that he was takin' up too much room. I reckon Bill started to roll, for the next thing I knowed I thought the roof was coming off. Of all the yelling you ever heard tell of, Bill certainly was keeping the pennant.

" 'Shut up!' I says, tryin' to holler in a whisper, because I knew 'Liza wasn't going to stand this racket very long. And sure enough, before I could get over to 'em and find what they was doing to each other, I heard her coming down the steps."

"Well, I should think she would—I should think she would have come down to you and the company you kept," sniffed Mrs. Graves. "I'd

have been as apt as not to tell you to put them men out, and go with 'em."

"I expect you would, ma'am," agreed the Captain, with a show of great and disarming innocence. "I looked for 'Liza to say something of the sort every minute.

"'Now you've done it,' I says, gettin' madder as I run in on 'em. But, Lord love you, I couldn't make out anything about them fellers. You couldn't tell whether Bill was eatin' Jim or Jim was eatin' Bill, or whether they was both sort of eatin' each other. I shouldn't have investigated if it hadn't been for 'Liza. But she was carryin' on so, I lit the lamp. There was Bill all hunched up in the bed lookin' wild like at Jim; and Jim was doing some of the almightiest scrougin' round under the covers that you ever saw.

"Suddenly something seemed to strike Bill. 'You quit that!' he hollered, and tried to jump out of bed. But just then the pesky thing commenced to fold. Its middle legs kind of humped themselves a little — maybe it was the cavortin' round the boys had been doin' that started it — but anyhow, the top bowed over as graceful as a lady salutin' partners in a country dance, and before either of them fellers could make their play, it whacked them on the shins about half-way between heel and knee.

'Liza had got there by that time, and I didn't know but it was as well the boys were folded up in a box.

" 'Why don't you wheel it round and help 'em out at the back?' she asked, for we could hear 'em just roaring inside the bed, and fighting for dear life. So I rolled the thing round — she hadn't any back to her — and there them two faces stuck up between the slats like two everlastin' skeerys in a shootin'-gallery; and both of them was begging us for pity's sake to pull the other one off of him. We could see a commotion going on under the clothes; and then all of a sudden 'Liza's brindled Tom shot out with a little piece of Jim's shirt hangin' to his whiskers, and his tail about the size of my arm.

" 'Liza was a serious woman; all she ever lacked of perfection was having a sense of humour; but she give one look at the cat and one look at them boys' faces, and she sat down in the middle of the floor and laughed till she cried. Her hair all fell down her back, and I couldn't do nothin' myself but holler till I was weak.

" 'Come and help us out of this, you gray-whiskered old goat!' they yelled. 'What kind of murder and sudden death have you got shut up in this bed, anyhow? Ow! Ouch! Oh-o-o-oh!'

“‘Cats!’ yelled Jim. ‘I seen one run across the floor just then!’

“‘That’s it, Jim,’ I said, between laughs. ‘I’m bettin’ that by the time you find them other two cats in the bottom of that bed, you won’t want to do a thing but go home!’

“The howl that boy let out would have moved a heart of stone. ‘Cap, oh, Cap!’ he says; ‘you don’t mean to say that they’s two more of them things in here, do you?’ And both of them like to have killed themselves trying to claw the top of that bed off.

“‘Liza,’ I says, kind of dreamy like, ‘didn’t you tell me that the reason you didn’t want me to sleep in that bed any more was because the cats and snakes and sech had a habit of comin’ in these cold nights and gettin’ into it?’

“‘Liza kind of sobbed out ‘Yes.’ It’s the first time she ever backed me in a lie — and the last. I could see Bill’s and Jim’s feet hanging out at what used to be the front of the bed, like four lost hams, and I leaned over and fetched ’em a swipe with my finger-nails. I reckon they’re both ticklish — from results. As I scratched ’em I said, ‘There’s them cats again,’ and Bill began to swear in such a mournful tone that it was almost like praying.”

“If that ain’t a man all over,” commented Aunt

Beck. "Things were bad enough, and you must mix in and try to make 'em worse. I wonder if there'd be a clean house or a decent bed in the world if the men had the managing of things."

"'Liza said something like that — next day," assented the Captain, mildly. "She was too busy laughin' just then to file any objections. The boys got meek.

"'Oh, Cap, please lift this dad-lammed bed loose,' they both begged.

"With that, I got on my dignity. 'I'll have you boys remember that you're in the presence of my wife. Quit your rough talk,' I says. And then I swatted 'em again with my nails, and kinder snorted like a cat.

"Say, Mark, you know that place in the Bible where they order the man to take up his bed and walk? Well, I tell you them two fellers come mighty near doing it when I got in my last lick on 'em. The old folding bed gave one or two jerks, and something tore loose. Them boys shot out and made a grab for their boots an' coats. They lit runnin'. 'Bout then, 'Liza remembered that she wasn't dressed for company. But they never knew she was livin'. They sprinted all the way home in their socks, and I wasn't troubled with 'em any more that winter. Besides which, I had one subject that was

always safe to bring 'Liza round. If she got a little too high-strung, all I had to do was to say, 'Cats,' and she'd think up another of the things that happened that night, and nearly kill herself laughing."

"So we're not to give you a folding bed," concluded Strong, pleasantly.

"Oh, I don't know about that," replied the Captain; "I guess I could rassle 'most any of the blamed things, after what I've been through since the time I was telling you of."

"I should think so," agreed Mrs. Graves, who had never got over her simple terror of the black faces of the new miners; "anybody that isn't afraid of those darkies needn't be afraid of anything. It doesn't seem right to me, Mark, and I can't make it seem right," she added, as an enlivening contribution to the conversation, "to turn out white men, people that you've known, as a body may say, all your life, for these darkies. I suppose they're all well enough where they belong; but you'll never get me to feel that they belong in your mine, in your white miners' places."

"Turn them out, Aunt Beck? I didn't do any such thing. They turned me out, you know," Strong replied, a little wearily. "I didn't choose negro miners. I don't think the climate suits them;

I don't suppose they ought to be brought here; but I was where I had no choice."

"That's just it," Mrs. Graves pursued, eagerly. "The climate doesn't suit them. The Lord never meant them to live where it was cold. They'll die like flies when the first snow comes. Now you mind what I say, and you'll see it."

Even Strong's patience and charity were worn well-nigh threadbare with this continual opposition from within.

"Well, well," he said, finally. "Have a little patience, Aunt Beck; and when I whip the Union, we'll have our own men back in the Twin Brothers."

"Oh, yes," the old lady sniffed, with an acid, superior air. "You men think of nothing but who whips. Why you and the Union can't make out to agree, is more than I can imagine."

"I agree all right, don't I, Captain?" rising and tossing his crumpled napkin down beside his almost untouched plate. "It's the Union that won't agree, Aunt Beck. You'll have to go and talk to the Union."

"He was always so from a boy," said his relative, shaking a reprehending head at his inoffensive gray tweed back as he marched out of the room. "You would think to look at him and hear him talk,

that he was the meekest, mildest creature; but he is just as bound to have his own way as the rest of the men."

The Captain merely grunted in reply, an inarticulate sound which might have meant almost anything. McClintock was less than half-way through his supper, having so far taken up a good part of his time telling the tragedy of the folding bed. As a married man, he had learned wisdom in his dealings with women. He intended to have the remainder of his meal; in peace, if it might be; but to have it, at any rate.

Three weeks after McClintock was domiciled at Strong's place, Mrs. Graves fled. She had been a depressing housemate all along, and her nephew was urging her to go to her daughter in California. Reading an account of the burning of a miner's house by the strikers in Pennsylvania, assimilating the distressful details of how the wife and two daughters perished in the flames, Mrs. Graves gave in and prepared for departure.

CHAPTER XII.

AN OMELET AND A "TIN ROOF"

THE man at the table wrote in silence. Presently he looked up and smiled, as at the voice of a friend. A soft, remittent grunting, or groaning, filled the room. It was the poplar-tree outside the window, breaking the stillness with the announcement that the wind had risen. Strong had been told, again and again, that the tree stood too close, that its branches rubbing against the woodwork scoured off the paint; but something in its voice had become dear and familiar, and he would not allow it to be felled, or even pruned.

Now he glanced up at the clock, then compared it with his watch. "Time the Captain was here," he muttered to himself. There had not yet been trouble enough in that district to warrant any apprehensions for McClintock; but when he failed to arrive with the mail at his usual time, his employer grew uneasy.

Scarcely had Strong turned back to his desk, when

the door swung slowly open, disclosing the tall figure of the old soldier. The Captain advanced far enough to slide the package of letters he brought on to a chair, then turned and went out without a word. The stir was so slight that Mark — absorbed in the work before him — was not sure that any one had been in the room until he turned and saw his mail lying there.

This was singular for the loquacious Captain; and Strong dropped his pen into the rack and ran hastily down-stairs. By the side door stood the mare and the little old buggy; flat upon the gravel walk beside it sat the Captain, smiling uncertainly at space.

“McClintock — McClintock!” cried the owner of the Twin Brothers, apprehensively, as he laid a hand upon the old man’s arm.

This brought a whole broadside of smiles, as the tall, thin old fellow scrambled to his feet and supported himself unsteadily against the hitching-post.

“You know me — you know me, Mark,” he began, with that curious incertitude of voice which marks the drunken man. “You know I don’t drink — not drink — never drink. Jes’ been up-town to get the eggs and the mail — the mum — mum — meggs and the ail.”

He contemplated this latter combination fatuously, and laughed once more.

"I mixed 'em — didn't I? Eggs and mail — meggs and ail — but, well!"

And he subsided to a sitting posture, with his back against the post.

Strong echoed the laugh rather half-heartedly, and made the mare fast. He must see what had become of old Sally, the cook and factotum.

"You need some supper, I guess, Captain," he said, hesitatingly.

"Yessir — yessir — I'll get the supper, for you an' me — for you an' me. Met old Sally down the road there with her bundle." He waved an arm largely. "She said she'd had a warning from the strikers."

The old gentleman chuckled as he clung unsteadily to the post. Presently releasing it, and declining with a shake of the head Strong's proffered arm, he slowly wobbled up the steps and steered toward the wash-stand set in a turn of the back hall. There he made several ineffectual attempts to connect the water with his face. There appeared to be a strong attraction between the top of the Captain's head and the bottom of the wash-basin, and it took violent holding back to avoid completing the circuit. Finally a bright idea seemed to visit him; he

lurched forward, and set his poll firmly against the wall just above the basin at this point, moved his head far enough around to wink slowly and laboriously at his employer, then started in upon his ablutions, Mark standing by looking on, between doubt and genuine apprehension.

“Strangest thing I ever saw — took one drink — one drink — jes’ one. Must ‘a’ been somethin’ in that drink, ‘cause if it had been anybody but me they’d be drunk — dam ‘f ‘ey wouldn’t!”

Strong was annoyed mainly by the Captain’s report of Sally’s defection. The old warrior’s condition was temporary, of course, and, so far as Mark knew, a thing which had never happened before, and would probably never happen again.

“You get yourself washed, and go lie down,” he counselled. “I’ll find Sally, and let her get you some supper.”

“Now Mark — now Mark Strong,” reproached the Captain, managing to stand straight by bracing his legs with feet wide apart; “you think I’m drunk. Boys back in town think I’m drunk. Soon’s I get washed — washed — washed, an’ get you some supper — I’m go’ back to town — show them fool boys I ain’t drunk!”

It was indeed likely that McClintock had left the impression abroad in Iroquois that he was in-

toxicated. After securing the mail, he had taken that one drink at Yount's place — he was so far faithful — there had been but one glass of liquor. But its effect was curious. It seemed to him hours later when he realized that he must go to the station and get a basket of farm produce which would be sent in that day from a certain outlying farm.

The eggs were placed carefully on top of this basket in a paper sack. The boy helping about the station carried the heavier articles to the buggy, but the Captain held fast to the eggs, admonishing his small assistant solemnly:

"Eggs is curious things — most people don't know an'thing 'bout eggs. I wouldn't trust you with them eggs, 'cause you're too young an' flighty," and he got into the buggy.

The boy had just placed the basket at his feet, and the Captain had deposited the eggs, of which he was the only worthy custodian, upon the seat, when the Chicago Vestibule Limited came through, and the mare started forward abruptly.

First and last, drunk or sober, the Captain was essentially a horseman, and the time never arrived when he could not attend to his horse; but at this particular moment it was harder than usual, and all extraneous matters (including eggs) disappeared from his mind as he dropped heavily to his seat,

and incidentally upon one corner of the bag of eggs.

During the drive home the Captain many times isolated those eggs — his boasted knowledge of their curious structure included an inkling of the fact that they were frail. But as the mare was an erratic roadster and her driver's vision somewhat clouded, there were sundry jars which brought him in close contact with the damaged paper sack. Between it and the Captain's apparel there grew up a friendship cemented by strong ties, — an attachment into which, whatever may have been the case with the garments, the eggs at least threw their whole being; one of those hasty, headlong, ill-considered intimacies from which neither party may free himself wholly and unchallenged.

Now, having washed himself, the Captain assumed a dignity, a grandeur of manner, that only an intoxicated man can wear. Going out to where the buggy still stood, he first looked anxiously for the paper sack; then, finding it and its contents impartially distributed over the leather cushion, he gathered up cushion, duster and all, and departed for Sally's kitchen. There he lighted the gas range, set a frying-pan above the blaze, and turned to lift the remnant of the paper sack from the buggy cushion. It held together just long enough to

come clear of the cushion and travel half-way to the range, then, with a sudden squash, the soaked bottom fell out of it to the floor.

Nothing daunted, the Captain, stooping unsteadily, dipped up so much as would suffer itself to enter the big spoon. The quantity seemed meagre, for a generous meal, so the self-appointed cook lifted the well-filled buggy cushion bodily, and poured the contents into the frying-pan just as Mr. Strong stepped through the kitchen door. As the old man bent over the frying-pan there was little to be seen of him from behind which was not egg decorated. He had eggs of all kinds attached to him, from shell to yolk, and he presented an amazing spectacle to his employer.

"Captain, what in the name of heaven have you been doing to yourself?" demanded Mark. "I left you washing, but I didn't think you were going to take an egg bath."

"Egg bath," repeated the Captain, as he straightened up laboriously and revolved slowly to face his interrogator.

He smiled expansively. "Egg bath — huh! can't you see what this is?" waving his hand airily at the range, the frying-pan, and the buggy cushion.

"Come home here — Sally's gone. I see you didn't have no dinner. Cross, like a man that

didn't have no dinner. Looked like a man that didn't have no dinner. I'm devo — devot — I'm devoted to you, Mark — I'll get you fine omelet."

Here the Captain stepped upon the disregarded paper sack and went down.

"Scrambled eggs, Mark," he muttered, as the other helped him to his feet and led him away. "I knew you liked your eggs scrambled."

When Strong had seen the Captain stumble across his bedroom, and wrap himself in a slumber robe, from which he refused to be parted, the little man in gray turned to the only method of communication with the outer world remaining to him. He rang up the office at the mine. In the empty silence of the house the bell sounded loud.

"Is that you, Jimmy?" he asked.

"All right, Mr. Strong. This is Jimmy," came the reassuring answer over the wire.

"Everything all right with you folks?" the mine owner asked next.

"All right here," was the word.

"Captain McClintock came home sick to-night," Strong pursued. "He'd been in to Yount's — I think they gave him knock-out drops. You go over to Mrs. Atchley's and get Mr. Tawney. Tell him to have the guard turned out, and put sentries on the line."

"All right, Mr. Strong," came back the startled answer, followed swiftly by the rattle of the receiver as it was hung in place, and Jimmy hastened away to do his employer's bidding.

"It was not the mine," muttered Strong to himself, as he turned away from the 'phone. "Then it was me."

This reflection led, very naturally, to the necessity for seeing at once to the fastenings of window and door. Strong went from room to room of the empty, echoing house, carrying a small brass lantern, bending to look at a catch or a fasten, now and then shaking a door or a window to see that the bolt was properly shot.

For some reason he went into the dining-room, which was on the ground floor at the side, without his light. He stepped softly across the floor, and peered out at the window through the slats of the inside blinds. At first he could make out nothing but blackness; then, as his unusually sharp eyes became accustomed to the dark, it seemed to him that he saw a black something standing in the drive where the old mare had stood an hour ago. As he debated the matter, as he raised his hand to make sure of the window catch, he heard a muffled thump, and something moved in the outline he had finally descried.

He drew back. Surely, that was the toss of a horse's head which he had seen, and it was the soft thump of a muffled hoof which had sounded at the same instant. He silently set the shutters wide and groped with his hand for the electric light button — Strong had his house lighted from garret to cellar — pressed it, and flooded the room with brilliance. He had drawn back, quite out of sight of any one who might be in that silent, sinister vehicle.

As the light blazed out, the horses shied and backed with muffled poundings of their cloth-covered hoofs. Strong, peering from his place of safety, could see a man's face, white and terrified, for an instant in the light; then it was swallowed up, as the equipage tore down the hill.

He had gone back to the Captain, and was remonstrating with him, attempting to get him to undress, his mind still busy with the prophecy Van Dorn had made the other day. "They'll kidnap you," said the owner of the *Gloriana*. "It's what they did in the Pacific Coal District ten years ago, when old man Murchison threatened to bring in Chinese miners. One fine morning Murchison was nowhere to be found. Everybody said he'd been murdered. His stockholders tried to fix up things; but when the Chinese were landed in San Francisco — it was before the Chinese exclusion bill — they turned 'em

back, and the stockholders came down to the Union. The very day they acceded to the Union's demands, Murchison was returned to his home, not much the worse for wear, but busted as a mine superintendent. Nobody wanted him any more. He'd been beaten."

This highly entertaining story, which was characteristic of the Job's comfort that Van Dorn dealt out in these days to his friend, was going idly through Mark's head, when the telephone bell jingled. He ran down-stairs to answer.

"Oh, Mr. Strong," came Tawney's perturbed voice over the wire, "is that you?"

Reassured, he went on:

"We've found something mighty queer over here. The men went out on sentry, and they found a rig down by the sycamore. It's got two bay horses — mighty good horses — but none of us ever saw them before; and they were hung up by one of them having gone to one side of the tree, and one to the other. I don't believe they'd run away — they seemed to have just walked away. We brought 'em in, and now we're wondering if they didn't just stray up from the road."

"Look at their hoofs," suggested Strong. "See if they have been tied up in cloths — muffled."

"Gee! All right. Hold on."

Silence for a moment; then, after it, in an excited tone:

"Yes, sir! We found a cloth on both the hind feet of one of them, and the other had his feet rubbed, where the strings had been."

"That team was here about fifteen minutes ago," said the owner of the Twin Brothers. "But there was a fellow driving — or at least in the buggy — then."

"Whose is it? What shall we do with it?"

"I don't know," Strong answered, "whose it is. Put it in the mule stable till morning, and we'll find out. I think it'll turn out to be a livery rig, and that nobody will know the man that hired it."

"Need anybody over there?"

"No," answered Strong, wearily. "Whatever it was, they'll not come back to-night."

"How's Cap?" came the next solicitous query. "Is he able to help you if you needed him?"

"Still lying in a sort of stupor," responded Strong.

And "Gee!" came Tawney's expressive comment once more. "Say, Mr. Strong, don't you reckon some of the men better come over there and sorter be around?"

"No, I think not, Tawney. Just keep a sharp

lookout there. I feel sure they'll not show up here any more to-night."

The Captain was ill for a week after his experience. Strong — who would never have resorted to the law to redress any of his own wrongs — demurred immediately when the old fellow declared, as soon as he was able to be afoot, that he meant to go to Yount's place and get even, and suggested a legal remedy, instead.

"See here, Cap, those were knock-out drops they gave you; men who are ready for that are ready for anything. There's a law that would cover this case. You let Yount's place alone. I had no idea you'd been going there. It isn't safe."

"You think a lot about going to safe places yourself, don't you?" jeered the Captain. "You sue the fellows that try gun practice on you — and the ones that are out to kidnap you — a heap you do. I'm just going down there to Yount's (Gus stood in with those fellows — he's as guilty as they are) and show him the beauty of a tin roof."

And this was the old man's last word on the subject.

But the next day, attired in the usual G. A. R. suit, the Captain, rather white and shaky, made his way to Yount's, where he encountered a very em-

barrassed, sheepish looking crowd, the most sheepish of all being the guilty Gus himself.

He worked successfully the ancient "tin roof" game; and, having lavishly treated every one in the room, and every man who looked through the door during the performance, was calmly leaving, cigar in hand, when Yount called after him, in a grievous voice: "But, I say, Cap, — er — who pays? I don't — where does the tin roof come in?"

To him the old man responded, amiably: "A tin roof don't come in, you thick-headed, wall-eyed Dutchman. It stays on the house — just where this treat is — see?" The door swung gently shut, and the Captain and his cigar marched proudly down the street, followed by the protesting wail of Yount, and the delighted roars of his erstwhile guests.

When he brought the story home to Strong, the little man in gray smiled over it; it was the Captain's way of getting even, and Mark Strong, more than another, believed in letting each man have his own method. And Mark had long ago recognized in McClintock, and often smiled at, that streak of childishness which seems to be a very usual trait in the character of the brave soldier. But a day or two later, when the owner of the Twin Brothers met Owen Llewellyn on the street in Iroquois, he

halted that worthy, who was going past without speaking.

"Llewellyn, I have a word to say to you," he opened, quietly. "Your people drugged Captain McClintock the other night — gave him knock-out drops at Gus Yount's place."

"My people," broke in Llewellyn, with the fury of a man accused of something he cannot honestly deny; "who are my people?"

"I guess you know who they are," returned Strong, briefly. "Anyhow, that's not the question. You strikers had knock-out drops given to the man who is the only person in the house with me."

He said no word of the other strange occurrences of that night. Despite his rage, Owen Llewellyn looked at him with intense curiosity.

"That's not fighting fair — it's not fighting at all," Strong pursued calmly. "I call that sort of thing murderous. The Captain is an old man — you might have killed him."

"Well," said the district president, "did you stop me to give me a lecture on what's right and what's wrong?"

"I stopped you to tell you that the Captain refuses to do anything about the matter, but that you've got me to settle with if his life is threatened in any such a sneaking, underhand way again. We take

our risks; we carry our guns; but we're not expecting to be poisoned like stray dogs. That's all."

He moved unconcernedly on his way. Owen Llewellyn looked after him with unappeased, unappeasable rancour.

"Damned upstart!" he snarled.

His helpless rage fairly tore him. The other's poise, his easy self-command and fearless clear-sightedness were as festering thorns in Owen's flesh. He had a feeling that, if he knew in what limb or member or organ of that slight, intrepid body the insolent courage and self-assurance resided, he could joyfully rend it piecemeal, drag them forth and trample on them—though he died next minute for it.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE WARNING

THE flight of old Sally left Strong and the Captain alone in the great house.

"Never you mind," McClintock said, "I'll get my boy Demas over here to cook for us; and then he can 'tend to the mare, too. I expect he'll cook in a new bunch of dishes every meal; and he can't make a bed that a human being can sleep in; but maybe the house'll have the luck to be hit by lightning, time we get the dishes all used up."

"Or possibly the strike will be over before that time," supplied Strong, quietly.

Now, for three weeks the two men had been maintaining this desolate masculine household, about as comfortable as shipwrecked mariners, except that they had plenty to eat, if one did not object to some anomalies in the matter of cooking and serving. The old mare with the young gaits made her daily trips to town, or to the mine; Strong had twice been fired upon, and his friends continued

to remonstrate at his recklessness in driving thus unattended, or with only the Captain beside him.

"When I can't do that," he replied to them, "I'll go out of the business, and make a free gift of the Twin Brothers to the town."

But now arose the necessity for a trip to Chicago. It was a critical time for him to leave, and the journey must be made at once. Another valise than the little grip which carried the magazine gun was packed, and he was giving his final orders to the Captain, when Demas came in to say that a woman at the door desired to speak to him.

He went out alone — the Captain a very few steps behind him, since he was never willing to have the slender gray figure far from his sight, these days. It was Julia Llewellyn.

"Come in, won't you, Jule?" the mine owner asked, after he had discovered who it was.

"No, Mark, let me stop here and tell you. I — nobody will overhear us, I guess."

She stood so long with bent face, twisting her fingers nervously together, that Strong repeated his invitation.

"What is it, Jule? Come in, child. Captain McClintock is here."

"Yes, I know — that's why I don't want to come in. I don't want to talk to any one but you. You'll

believe me — and you won't ask a lot of questions."

"I'll believe you," repeated her old lover, smilingly, "but I can't be so sure I won't ask questions — nor that I will take advice. You know, Jule, that never was my way."

The woman came closer and laid a shaking hand upon his gray sleeve.

"Don't drive the mare to town!" she whispered. "For God's sake, don't!"

Strong put a kindly palm over the tremulous fingers on his arm.

"That's just what all my timid friends have been saying to me," he reassured her, cheerily. "Now, I believe I've proved that a man is safe so long as he thinks he's safe, and goes quietly about his business." (As a matter of fact Strong's life had been attempted more than once since the Union withdrew its men from his mine — and especially since the negroes came in; but this was always his tone, his assertion.)

"I mean to-night," urged Julia. "Don't go to-night."

Strong drew back, and her hand fell to her side.

"How did you know I was intending to go to-night?" he asked, in a changed voice.

There was, so far as he knew, nothing to have

given outside information of this movement of his — nothing but the telegram in his pocket. Could the operator at the station have told the strikers? He remembered, apparently for the first time since the interview began, that Julia belonged to them, that her connections were among those who were not contented with the strike, nor even with the boycott, but who must resort to violence.

“There,” said the woman, in a heart-sick voice, “I’ve been telling myself all the way over that I must make you believe me in spite of — of Owen and Bob.”

Strong had recovered himself, and now spoke very gently.

“I will believe whatever you say to me, Julia — but I would like to know who told you that I was going to drive into town at this time of night.”

“I think you can guess,” she answered, in a very low voice. “I wasn’t fit to bring up a boy. I seem to lack the faculty of controlling him at all. Bob’s a loving son, and when I’m with him I can influence him; but when he gets with others — I think you can guess.”

“Well,” said Strong, in his cheerful, even tones, as soon as she had finished her halting half-explanation, “I guess it’s a good thing I didn’t promise to take your advice, for I’ve got to get to

Chicago to-night, and there is no way but to drive over to the station."

"You might go across the fields and take the trolley," suggested the woman, eagerly — pleadingly. "That's the plan I thought of, after — after I found out. I knew you wouldn't be turned back from your trip; but I thought that for my sake — think how awful — how awful — it would be for me if anything happened to you, Mark, and *he* was concerned in it."

"The path through the field is lonelier than the big road," suggested Strong. "Once outside my line, I'd rather be on the public highway, Julia."

"But they won't know that you're going that way. They'll be looking for you on the road," she explained. And her hearer shivered as he remembered that "they," of whom she spoke, were son, brother, and near relative to this woman before him.

"Well, I must be starting," he said, with a sigh. "Thank you, Julia, for caring to warn me. Though of course I understand that it was mainly to keep Bob out of trouble."

He picked up the valise and the little grip, then set the latter down and offered his hand to his old sweetheart.

"Good-bye, my dear girl," he said gently. "It

seems curious for you and me to be fighting on opposite sides in this war."

She longed to tell him how little anything mattered to her beside his safety and welfare; but a sob caught in her throat, and when she had bravely swallowed it down, she was only ready to ask, humbly:

"Mayn't I walk over with you, Mark? Let me carry the little bag. I want to talk to you. And I sha'n't breathe free till I see you on that trolley-car — you'll be safe enough on it, with the lights, the conductor, the passengers and all."

He let her take the small, light grip, which contained (shades of Samson and Delilah!) his papers and gun. He glanced absently back for the Captain, and, not seeing him, stepped away beside Julia toward the path she had spoken of. The lawn sloped abruptly to that side upon which the fields were that they must cross to reach the trolley. There was no gate; but a rude, small stile took them over to where a beaten path showed dimly in the dark. This way was too narrow for them to walk side by side, and Strong made a movement to take the small bag, but Julia retained it.

"I'll just go over and wait with you there, Mark, till a car passes. I'll stand in the shadow; nobody will notice me; and then I can slip back as I came."

"How are you getting along these days, Julia?" Strong asked, quietly. And the woman wondered that he could have thought for commonplace matters such as this, while his own life was in mortal danger, and he must know it.

"Oh, well enough," she answered, somewhat at random. "I earn a decent living, and I think I am able to do some good in the world."

"I know it," returned Strong, heartily. "I've heard your name called — with praises and gratitude — more than once, Julia, where people were in need. You're a good woman to give, out of your poverty, and of what comes so hard."

The tribute was simply spoken, in Mark's own blunt way; yet Julia's heart swelled to hear him; it pleased her more than any flowery compliment could have done. She was an approbative creature; love and admiration were the breath of life to her; and this amiable weakness led her into many follies, while it made her most touching and lovable.

"Mark, dear, when you come back from Chicago I want to have a little talk with you," she said, pressing closer in the dark, and speaking scarcely above a whisper. "I don't believe you are hard and overbearing and cold, like — like they say of you. I think if I'd explain things — certain things — to you — maybe it would do good. I walk through

this field every afternoon about six o'clock, when I'm sewing for Mrs. Kesterson. Maybe sometime, when you come back, you'll happen to be passing along — going through here, too. It won't take much time for me to say what I want to. I've thought it up many a night when I couldn't sleep."

They had now passed Strong's boundaries, and had nearly reached the edge of the field, where some tall bushes interfered with their sight of the road down which the trolley came.

"Jule," said the man, wearily, "it's been a good while since you and I walked across this meadow together — do you remember when it was?"

It had been during those never-forgotten summer evenings when they planned the grand house whose doors she had just left.

The woman's heart leaped within her, at the words and the tone. "Oh, Mark!" she breathed, and sought in her pocket for a handkerchief to brush away the tears which had been close to her eyes during the entire interview.

"It's a long time ago, isn't it, Jule? And you and I have come a weary way since then. We're middle-aged people now; though you, who have had it harder than I, look so much younger. You look like a big, rosy-faced girl — I thought of it as you stood talking to me in the lamplight back there. And

beautiful, dear — more beautiful and sweet-looking than ever. It's almost as though these twenty years had been an ugly dream."

"I wish to the Lord they had," sobbed Jule. She was thinking of the practical results of her years; the headstrong, ill-managed boy, the poverty-stricken little cottage, the forlorn old age which seemed likely to end it all.

"I don't," said Strong, softly. "All of a man's experiences go to make up that man. You wouldn't be you, and I wouldn't be I, without what we've gone through." He checked, hesitated, then turned back toward her in the soft obscurity. Ah, surely the evil dream of those twenty years was over at last. Her heart almost stopped beating. His hand sought for her hand. He went on gently, "But now, Jule — now —"

"Mark!" she screamed. "Come back! Oh, my God! — Mark!"

She had seen a movement in the bushes beyond them, the shouldering of stealthy dark figures which waited behind the leafy screen. As though her voice had been a signal, they sprang into the path, shouting:

"That's him! Go for him! — Ah-h!" in a long, canine snarl which Julia scarcely identified with her son's clear, boyish tones.

Strong, who had wheeled with lightning quickness at the cry, now flung a quick hand back toward the woman behind him.

“The grip — quick! My gun’s in it,” he whispered.

It was sheer panic which made her turn and run around the clump of trees, calling:

“Come this way, Mark — this way!”

But to the man in mortal need it seemed as though she knew that she was taking away his only weapon.

For an instant the attackers hesitated. Then Strong’s own words told them that he did not have his dreaded gun; and they came on with a rush.

He drew himself up with the determination to meet them hand to hand, well knowing what a small chance he stood in the unequal conflict; but the word “run” had never had place in Mark Strong’s lexicon, and he did not think of giving way.

There was a soft hum, a rattle and jingle, and far below, the trolley climbed the slope toward this spot. Jule gained the roadway, sprang into it, and ran screaming upon the car-track to signal a stop.

But the car came slowly up the long incline; it had not yet arrived. However, such light as it made disconcerted the assailants. Strong could see them plainly now. They were four in number — “Wolves hunt in packs,” he muttered between his set teeth,

as he balanced his chances of following Julia, or catching up a stone which his quick eye had seen by the path, and attempting to make a stand.

Even as his form stiffened for this latter course, there was the quick patter of steps at a run behind him. The next instant he was lifted off his feet and swung around as though he had been a babe — and the Captain stood in front of him. He heard the swift rasp of leather, as the old man pulled his guns from their holsters; and that cool voice that grew soft in its anger, said:

“Come on, damn ye, and there’ll be a few funerals to-morrow.”

The men in front suddenly stopped, swerved, and bunched; for an encounter with McClintock, armed and warned, was no part of their programme.

Strong and McClintock edged toward the bushes till the way to the road was clear.

“Aw, you dirty, sneakin’ cowards!” taunted the Captain. “Set a woman to stealin’ his gun, and then jump on him. Now there’s a gun in front of you, if there’s a man in the crowd, why don’t you show it?”

Dead silence, except for the rattle of the stopping car, and the rustle of the bushes as the men entrenched themselves behind the foliage.

“Dirty little boys — that’s what you are —

'round makin' faces at people," concluded the Captain, scorchingly. Then he added, quietly:

"Get on the car, Mark. Step a little slow, and I'll back after you."

So the two went across the illuminated space, Strong facing toward the light, the trolley, the vociferously inquiring conductor and motorman; the Captain backing along in his rear, covering the bushes at the road's edge with his guns. There was no passenger on the car.

"Yes — a hold-up," Strong assented to the conductor's direct question, as he caught the railing and set his foot upon the step. "No, thank you, we don't need any help — they ran."

The words might be called triumphant; but the owner of the Twin Brothers mounted the step with hanging head.

Julia had watched with wide, horrified eyes, wringing her hands together. As the Captain backed far enough to bring her within the circle of his vision, he exploded a sudden little oath that was like a cough, dived quickly and caught the grip from her hand, and was on the car in a moment.

"All right! go ahead! You won't be fired into — this was to be knife work, or kidnapping — no shooting," he called to the car men, his foot making a great racket with the gong, though never for an

instant lowering the one pistol which he still held in his hand. "Noise and light is enough for them fellers. I reckon a right good wind would do to fight 'em with," he crowed.

"No — you cussed fool — you don't stop for her. She wasn't with us — she was helpin' the other fellers."

And the glowing car rattled away in the night, leaving the white-faced woman, a thing stricken, beside the track.

The guns still in hand, McClintock walked into the car and dropped in the seat beside his employer.

"God!" he murmured, drawing in a deep breath. "I thought they had you that time, Mark, sure. Why, what's the matter? You ain't hurt, are ye?" looking anxiously into Strong's face that was drawn and gray with pain. "They didn't get you anywheres, did they? I didn't hear no shot — did that woman have a knife?"

Mark shuddered as he answered, "No. I'm all right. I feel a little sick. I'm a little sick, but —"

He stopped and glared at the bag in the other's hand. "Where did you get my grip?" he half-whispered.

"That hell-cat had it," answered the Captain, bitterly.

All the way to the station the old man talked,

under pressure of a sort of jubilant excitement. Strong sat turned from him, and watched the night landscape through the window. The Captain finally dropped away, and secured a more appreciative audience in the car men, looking in from time to time, from his station on the front platform, to caution Strong about sitting by the window.

"'Tain't safe," he urged. "Maybe there's more than one crowd out after you to-night."

"Never mind," said the owner of the Twin Brothers, nervelessly. "It doesn't make any difference. Oh, you don't want me to sit by the window? All right," and thereafter, obediently, he drooped in a corner seat, his eyes fixed upon the floor, his pale, worn face fallen into lines of pain, weariness, dejection.

"Ain't gettin' sick again, are you?" McClintock asked, solicitously, as they neared the station.

"No, I'm better, thank you, Captain. I'm all right," returned Strong, sombrely.

But between him and the Captain's cheerful talk, the noises of the car, and the throbbing of the incoming train, sounded the voice of his one-time love. The question was as a knife in his heart; but he must ask and ask himself, why had she carried the little grip?

Why, if it were not an ambush into which she had deliberately led him, had she called his name aloud — bidding him take a path which showed the attackers where to find him, while she fled with his only weapon? His sick spirit recoiled from these ceaselessly reiterated questions.

That night, as he lay wakeful in his berth, the drumming wheels talked to Mark Strong of Julia. He felt now, for the first time, that he had lost her. Before, she had been there waiting for him to choose, or pass by scorning. In the light of her bitter reprisal (as this attempt on his life seemed to him) he admitted that it had been — half-unconsciously — a comfortable thought that she was there — and in that attitude.

Whose fault was it that her love for him — he never gave up his belief that she had once loved him well — had turned to resentment, and then to deadly hatred? He had always intended to marry her sometime; but he had fed his sense of power with the thought of the woman who chose between Mark Strong and a drunken miner — and chose ill — remaining humbled to grace his triumph.

We might prefer that men and women should be made other than they are; but it would be useless to deny that Julia's passive acceptance of her fate, her avoidance of other lovers — which he knew to

be a tribute to the strength of her early attachment to himself — moved Strong not at all. Even the timid advances she had made toward his liking — which he now shivered with pity to remember — had not touched him at the time. This blow in the face, this fierce, revengeful repudiation of him, which made the woman impossible to him for ever, left the man longing for her, bereft by her loss, as he had never been since first the news was brought to him that she had married Jack Llewellyn.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE SIGN OF THE GOAT

STRONG came back from Chicago a haunted man. All day he was feverishly at work about the Twin Brothers, throwing a passion of energy into the simplest question of its administration. But the evenings at home worried the Captain.

McClintock had never been much of a reader. His opinion would have been that of the making of many books there is great weariness. And when Mark sat for half an hour at a stretch, gazing through—or past—a volume, without turning a leaf, his friend was not far wrong in judging that there was something on his mind.

So the Captain's old jokes were brought out and furbished, and retold, and as many new ones added as circumstances would furnish him. On the third day after Strong's return, fate was kind, and the Captain came home bubbling with merriment.

"Say, Mark," he began at the supper-table, "you remember that goat of Hennessy's?"

Strong nodded absently.

“Well, Hennessy’s goat never has liked your niggers. I don’t say that it ain’t mutual; they’ve lammed most of the hide off of him, trying to convince him of the error of his ways; but Billy, he don’t convince; he don’t vote with the majority; Billy would go to a Chicago aldermanic meeting, and come away honest. Well, this evening I was sitting out in front of the office, with my chair tipped back against it, my hat pulled down over my eyes, and thinking whether I wanted worse to start for home or take a nap, sorter gapin’ over in the direction of the company houses, when I noticed Billy. He stood up at the far end from me and looked down the three rows of shanties, as though he was tryin’ to decide which one would yield him the most joy. He decided on the east line toward the pond. He come down skirtin’ the back fences. He had his lip up, and was lookin’ sorter contemptuous at them there pickaninnies, and them black women he seen in the houses in place of the folks he was used to.

“Say, Teddy doesn’t extend his race suicide theories to the negro, does he? He needn’t. I counted an even two hundred kids in that row of thirty shanties. Well, I did. I can’t help it. The kids were there. I just said I counted them.”

Strong looked up and smiled. The Captain went on, encouraged:

"I reckon they all seemed too peaceful for him. There was them pickaninnies just lollopin' around the doorways, like licorice-drops; and the women was a-singin', some of 'em, at the wash-tubs. It sure must 'a' looked too peaceful for him; he seemed to hanker after that atmosphere of strife which is natural to him. He hunted up some small boys, and I saw him dodge several bricks, run two or three of the kids in at the doors, stand off a dog with a look, and calmly pull down a pair of britches off o' the clothes-line when a woman wasn't lookin'. She came out of the door in time to rescue part, I reckon, for I saw her carrying something back in the house, as Billy pranced stiff-legged on down the line."

"He's a regular fighter," said Strong. "Billy's a general in his small way."

"Yes. Well, he gave a display of his strategy right then. He wandered into the back yard of Babe Jackson's, that big, black fellow that always has more coal to weigh, and more laugh to the square inch than any man in the mine. Babe, he's got an amount of family that sure ought to cheer Teddy up a lot — ten kids and a dog. Babe does a little gardening, and he believes in having all the

luxuries of life; so he keeps three stands of bees in some old sections of hollow log that he has set up on legs. Babe's dog lit into Billy and insulted him. Billy retorted, and the dog retired to the rear and assumed a reclining posture, assisted by the goat. Then Billy fell into a meditative state. He had gone the length of the row, and I reckon he thought he had done enough for one day."

"The way you enter into Billy's secret imaginings is certainly curious," challenged Strong.

The old gentleman fingered his gray chin-beard meditatively.

"I always had a fellow feeling for a goat," he said, mildly. "Some folks say I look like one. Some folks tell me that I've got a voice like one. Anyway, I know how they feel when they loaf around tryin' to hunt up something exciting."

"Looking for a row," suggested Strong.

"Now, Mark—now, Mark," deprecated the Captain. "You know I'm a peaceable man."

"And Billy's a peaceable goat," supplied Strong; and they both laughed.

"Well, something attracted Billy's attention right then to the bee-gums, and he sa'ntered over toward them in the calmest manner imaginable. Thinks I, there'll be something doing in about a minute; and I come up where I could see better.

He stood there for the full minute that I had give him, his legs braced, head down, and tail flitting defiance to all the world. I thought the thing was off, when I saw him start forward. He marched up to the middle hive, as unconcerned as you please, and pushed at it."

Mark's brightening eye and twitching lip confessed that the situation was growing amusing; and the Captain proceeded:

"It didn't take those bees long to get a committee out to see — not near as long as it does the pit boss when some of the men are loading slate. Billy backed off a few feet, shook his head a couple of times, and I heard him murmur, 'Um-m-m. Nennay!'"

Strong laughed at the Captain's absolute reproduction of the goat's voice and manner.

"You can laugh," the old man said; "I did myself, I giggled all over; 'cause you can talk about the little ant being industrious; but when it comes to trouble, the busy bee has got more industry to the square inch than any living thing I ever investigated. They ain't a bit shy about presenting their credentials. I reckon what they said to Billy was a little irritating; for he backed off about ten feet and commenced to give a first-class imitation of a butting goat. I couldn't keep still. I whooped

right out, 'Go it, Billy! Butt in and get what's comin' to you — and get it quick.'

"He did. I reckon if you had measured them, there would have been about a beer-keg of bees that poured out of that hive and rested on Billy. Why do I measure 'em that way? 'Cause no man livin' could ever have counted 'em. There was a bee wherever one could get a toe-holt, and they didn't argue about who had the floor — Gee! no, they all had it to onct."

The Captain was in his element now. The haunted look was gone from Strong's eyes. That pale face of his was flushed with laughter; the curious supper which poor Demas had prepared was going well. The old man helped his employer to fried potatoes, and continued:

"Billy circled around backward a few times, all garlanded up with strung-on bees, like an Injun brave. He shook his head, and said, 'Nan — *na-a-a-ay!*' in different keys, and with different slides, for the next few seconds, while they were getting down to his side. I reckon the smell must have staggered 'em a little, for you could see they didn't begin to sting right off. But Billy sure did look 'different.' He looked like they tell in the story about a cloud hanging over the hero. Well, Billy he had a cloud, and it was sure hanging on heroic-

ally; so much so that he got powerful uneasy and started for home. He turned his back on that hive just in time for another bunch of home-seekers to settle on some of the unclaimed territory. Then Billy's doubts were changed to certainties. He dropped his tail to half-mast. He bounded up into the air as if somebody had made a fire under him. 'Umph! Um-m-m! — *Mm-my-God!*' he said, as he started out on rush orders."

"Come, now, Captain," remonstrated Strong, between laughs. "You've told me what the goat thought; but I submit it to you that you can't tell me what he said."

"I can," asserted the Captain. "They was his very words. I backed up against the wall so as not to fall down laughin'! And say, talk about gettin' up speed in a short time — Billy had her wide open and was giving her sand every jump, before he passed the corner of Jackson's house. He was goin' home. As he come by Babe's door, Babe's dog got gay — I reckon he seen that the goat was in trouble — and took after him. I think Billy loaned him about a cupful. That dog didn't wait for more, though I'm sure that Billy's generosity would not have given out on just one little measly cupful. The dog fell all over himself, and yelled till you could hardly hear Billy askin' for Nanny. Babe's

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door was open, and in the poor dog went — bees and all. I guess Babe was takin' a wash, for he hadn't much on but an expression of terror when he come out of a side window."

Demas had halted in the door to hear the story. "I bet Big Babe didn't laugh then," he commented. "I never seen him but what he was a-laughin'."

"He took this thing serious," agreed the Captain. "Bolly Read lives about half-way down the row, and his wife was a-bendin' over the wash-tub (that fat, round, black woman that does our washin', Mark) not noticin' all the ructions we was havin' up our way. You know it was a hot day, and she didn't have on much but a calico wrapper, and that was stickin' like the paper on the wall, where she'd wiped her hands on it. I guess Billy was sorry for them bees that had such a hard time gettin' down through his hair to his real feelings; anyhow, he spread a few warm words of welcome on Sister Read as he passed. She rose suddenly, said 'Gawd!' kinder pious-like, and then she looked around for what it was that had hit her. She stood lookin' jest one second — not longer than that, I'll swear — and then she set down right quick. She didn't stay sot any longer than it took her to set down; she hopped up and sprinted for the house — for bees do get busy. Sister Read knows that now. I guess Billy

lost a nice little bunch on her. Next he passed Aunt Minervy — you know, that old yellow woman that's the mother of Charlie and Jeff and Wingfield. She was washin', too — they mostly are. She went into the tub. Billy was gettin' excited, and he was so rough."

As Demas wiped the tears of merriment from his small, light eyes, he looked with admiring envy at the old man.

"I wish't I'd 'a' been there to see that," he said, almost devoutly. "Nothin' never happens when I'm around."

"Things happened around where Billy was," pursued the Captain, joyously. "He side-stepped and landed a few swift ones on Jake Washington's young shoats. Them pigs!" The Captain dropped his face in his two palms, and shook. "They spread the news — they sure did spread the news," he declared. "When they thought their end of creation was pretty well informed, they went under the house, and come near tipping it over. They also had a few bees on hand that they were willing to let go cheap — on account of being loaded up too heavy; but bees is stayers."

The Captain deemed that he was now well enough into his precious tale to venture a little experiment — a bit of a test; so he paused, smiling

reminiscently, as though that might be all. And he was duly gratified with Mark's prompt and interested —

“Well, how did it come out — for Billy?”

“Billy?” echoed the guileful Captain; “w’y, by the time I got my attention attracted away from the shoats, Billy was leadin’ two hound pups by about a length. I felt sorry for them enthusiastic pups, ’cause I knew just what a bitter disappointment it was goin’ to be to their young hearts when they caught Billy. By this time, the goat was leavin’ chunks of tired bees at every doorstep; an’ when the poor little strangers would go in and cuddle up to some of your black men, and want to be clasped to their manly bosoms, it was mighty strange how unsympathetic their hosts was. Tell about darkies bein’ so warm-hearted and affectionate! They give ’em the house; but stay with ’em an’ talk over the events of the day, they would not. It seemed like them few quarts of bees spread over more territory, and got more attention, than any similar amount of animated matter I ever heard of.

“Billy took the corner on two legs, and went down the path toward Dempsey’s, you know, used to be, — it’s old Uncle Si Pickney’s now, — while those bees stayed with him like bill collectors. Just as he dipped the hill, and was goin’ out of our sight,

he met Jim Jones, my big brawny sergeant. Brave as a lion, you know, Jones is; we've always declared he wouldn't run from anything; and I guess he wouldn't from anything human — but when Billy landed him a corkscrew in the solar plexus, and loaned him about a quart of stingers geared to seven hundred jobs a minute, an' just eager to begin work — well, I speeded him for a second or two, and then the pace got too hot to estimate. Jim wears one of these here negligent shirts, that have forgot about buttons; and the bees went inside for the sake of the coolness — but I don't think they took any coolness with them. Jim said something that sounded some like — ”

The Captain glanced at the boy, Demas, who sat on the floor embracing his knees and indulging in mute ecstasies of mirth.

“ Well, I don't know no African languages, and I guess that's what Jim hollered out, in his excitement. He sure did give a first-class imitation of a Zulu war-dance, anyhow. He started after Billy with such a distressed air that Billy turned to come back and console him. Then that African must 'a' realized his mistake; for he yelled something that sounded like 'Nay, Pauline!' and came down in my direction. I had no wish to meet James right then — if he *is* my sergeant, and a mighty good one,

too; and I was just fixin' to hop inside the office and shut the door, when he turned in at his own house.

"His wife — big Maria, you know, that looks and steps like some sort of heathen queen — she saw Jim comin' — the whole row was on to the matter by this time — and as he entered in at the front door, she exited out at the back — timed to exactly the same rate of speed, and with a camphor bottle in one hand and a box of bakin' soda in the other — the whole outfit of bee-sting medicine there was to be found on them premises, I reckon; for we sure heard Jim a-chargin' around terrific; and the darkies came to me afterward and said that Jim had carried on scandalous, and they were afraid that he would lick his wife! Did you ever? Well, some things beat my time, and I passed this one up.

"Billy sprinted through several briar-patches on purpose, and he managed to get rid of nearly half his bees before he hit the company pond — he had changed his mind about going home; a life on the ocean wave was what he craved at that time. As he struck the water I heard his voice raise in a long hurrah. 'M-m-m! — *Thank Gawd!*' he hollered."

"Now, Captain," objected Strong, who had long

been frankly roaring with laughter, "there you go with your goat talk again."

"He did — that's what he said," maintained the Captain. "Who wouldn't, under the circumstances?"

"Well," inquired Strong, quizzically, "did it have any moral effect on that lawless Irish goat of Hennessy's?"

"Yes," returned the Captain, impartially, "yes, I think it did. I believe it's saved his life, for he's a-goin' to give that whole row a wide berth hereafter — and it's sure a mighty dangerous neighbourhood to him from now out. Poor Billy! You wouldn't hardly recognize him. There's patches of hair and hide off everywhere; and where the bees landed thick an' strong, there's humps and knobs and bulges that plumb changes the unhappy goat's geography — hey? his what? Yes, that's it, his 'natomy. It's changed now, like Napoleon changed the map of Europe. Funny about bees, ain't it?"

"Yes," agreed Mark, with a comfortable laugh that did the old man's heart good to hear. "Yes, Captain; as you tell it, it's certainly funny about bees — and about goats, and darkies, and shoats, and pups — your entire *dramatis personæ*."

CHAPTER XV.

AN UGLY COMPACT

"I saw Mark Strong with the Llewellyn woman this morning."

Van Dorn leaned over the low hedge to where his sister rested under a blossoming apple-tree, after a practice game of tennis.

The girl looked up with a sudden glow on her smooth cheeks.

"I think I must try to find some means of convincing that person that she doesn't really want to continue to live in Iroquois," she said, sharply.

"I thought you women had all sorts of ways and means of conveying such hints," Van Dorn suggested, lazily.

"Well, we women haven't," his sister returned, sharply; "but if I were a man like you, I don't think I should fail to find a way to make that seamstress impossible to Mark Strong."

The man drew back and laughed a little — a hateful laugh.

"By God, Jane! you women are little devils when it comes to fighting each other," he said, rather admiringly.

"Nonsense," snapped Miss Van Dorn, rising and shaking the fallen petals from her white linen skirts. "You men profess to be shocked when we act like men, fighting for what we want, with such weapons as we can get our hands on. But you're not shocked at all, and you know you're not."

She turned and sauntered toward the house, striking her skirts with the tennis-racket in her firm, muscular hand.

"Jane — I say, Jane! were you in earnest — in what you suggested — about my assistance, I mean?" Van Dorn called after her.

"Of course I was," she answered over her shoulder. "Why should I have said such a thing if I didn't mean it?"

"I might not be able to help you at all — in that way," debated her brother.

Miss Van Dorn faced about, and even came back a few steps.

"If I were a man with your looks, and money," she said, shortly, "I wouldn't make such a silly speech as that about a woman of her class. Of course you can do what you please with her. And I think it'll be only friendly — In short, Tulley,"

and she laughed a little, "I want a row raised about that person. You're a rather notorious individual for getting rows raised, of that sort; they have cost you a pretty penny, and a good deal of inconvenience, before now. But in this case it would be money in my pocket (and that means your pocket), and I'll take it very kindly if you'll give me a helping hand."

"All right, Jane, I'm ready to make any sacrifice—of that sort—of my personal feelings, in your service," said Van Dorn, with a grin. "You just stand back and watch my play."

Surely this was a strange compact—between a brother and a sister; this easy, frivolous agreement to meddle with life's most terrible explosives. It was a pact which must have in it the seeds of ruin and of death; it was such a weapon as inevitably wounds the hand that wields it, whether or no it ever reaches its intended victim.

When Miss Van Dorn reached the house she found her sister-in-law, a small, pale woman, sitting upon the broad porch with her two children. Celia Van Dorn never looked at her beautiful, rosy boy and girl without a curious feeling of thankfulness toward their father. And such a bond was needed, indeed, to reconcile her to life as Van Dorn's wife. She and Jane Van Dorn had been girl

friends; or rather, Jane had discovered Celia, learned that her wealth was a stable fact, and recommended her to Tulley as a *parti*. The unmarried woman never lost the tone of authority, of patronage, which she had then adopted toward her small, unassuming Western friend.

"Celia," she began, abruptly, "I wish you'd get the Llewellyn woman to come here to the house to do some sewing."

"For you?"

"For me, or for yourself, if you need any. I want her here — in the house."

Miss Van Dorn was passing on, when her sister-in-law's quiet tone stopped her.

"If you really want Julia Llewellyn to sew for you, why don't you send for her, or go and see her and hire her?"

Jane laughed shortly, then turned and seated herself upon the porch step.

"Donald, run down and get my book," she said to the boy. "I left it under the tree by the tennis-court. Dorothy, don't you want to go in and get aunty a glass of water?" Looking at the other, she began, bluntly:

"Now, Celia, I've got those two juveniles out of the way, I'll tell you that I've asked the haughty

lady to sew for me, and she doesn't seem to wish to do so."

"Well, then, get some one else to do your work, and let her alone," suggested Mrs. Van Dorn, briefly.

"I would," said Jane, "but there are other things beside sewing in the matter. I have — oh, well, say I have a curiosity about the woman, and I want to study her at short range."

"I suppose you are interested in her on account of Mark Strong," Mrs. Van Dorn observed.

Her sister-in-law nodded; she made no secret of her designs upon the owner of the Twin Brothers.

"Well, Jane," began the other, "you haven't asked my advice; I don't suppose you put any faith in my judgment, or that you care to hear my opinion; but my opinion is that Mark Strong never loved anybody but Julia Copeland — Julia Llewellyn — and he never will."

Jane Van Dorn puckered her face into a mocking little grimace.

"How sentimental we are," she laughed, lightly. "Dotty Dimple," to the little niece who had just brought out the glass of water, "don't you want to go down and help brother hunt for that book?"

She looked with smiling eyes after the short legs and rustling white skirts. "It'll be some time before they find it," she commented.

"I wish you wouldn't lie to the children," remonstrated Mrs. Van Dorn, quietly. "They find it out, you know, and it's a bad example. If you want them out of the way, if you had anything you wished to tell me or ask me, which they were not to hear, why not say so?"

"Why not, indeed?" laughed Miss Van Dorn, picking a spray of apple-blossom to pieces. "Why not? Just my bringing up in a French school, I suppose."

Mrs. Van Dorn rose to go in.

"Are you going to hire that woman for me, Celia?" her sister-in-law questioned.

"No."

"I wish you would give me a reason," angrily.

Little Mrs. Van Dorn turned in the doorway of her own house.

"Since when have I been obliged to give you reasons for my actions, Jane?" she asked. "I don't choose to have Julia Llewellyn here at the house. If I had chosen to do so, I shouldn't need to ask you, or to discuss it with you."

Miss Van Dorn was on her feet now, and the faces of both women were flushed. But Jane's voice

had dropped with anger, and she drawled out with an affectation of indifference:

"Jealous, eh? Your precious husband? Do you know, your vulgar jealousy of Tulley is getting to be notorious. I heard some one say the other day that you were afraid to have a good-looking woman about the house."

"I guess you heard yourself or Tulley say that," Mrs. Van Dorn threw back at her, contemptuously. "It sounds like one or the other of you. And it couldn't have been any one else — *because there's no truth in it* — no one else ever thought of or said such a thing. And now, since you've chosen to speak with so much frankness, I may as well tell you, Jane, that you'll get no good tagging after Mark Strong — why, he doesn't know there's such a woman as you in the world. I decline to help you make a fool of yourself."

"Does that mean that you won't drive with me and the children to the Twin Brothers this afternoon? Mr. Strong has invited them to go over and hear the negroes sing as they change the shift. Don and Dot are wild about it, and I promised to drive them over with you in the double trap."

Again across poor Celia Van Dorn's face came that softening which mention of her children always brought. The two sturdy, rosy-faced, frank-eyed

little souls were trudging across the lawn, now, shouting explanations about the patiently-sought-for book.

"Why, Aunt Jane, I'll bet it's just another of your forgets," Don called. "I don't believe there was any book there."

"We looked all over the grass, and we climbed up some in the tree," Dot chimed in, "but we couldn't find any book."

"Never mind," said their aunt, with that smile that puzzled and put them so at fault; "I guess I left it in my room, after all. No — no — you needn't go there for it," and their mother was saying low to Jane:

"No, I'll go if you think the children would enjoy it. I don't know that it can do any harm. For what time did you order the trap?"

"Five o'clock. That will give you time to dress, and have them got ready." Jane chose to ignore Celia's more significant observation.

Lunch found Van Dorn constrained and ill at ease, as he always was when he wanted something from his wife. It was a never-ending source of bitterness to him that he must yet stand in the attitude of one ready to be benefited by her. Yet, the hard-headed, soft-hearted little woman had been her father's right-hand man; she knew the mine,

its product, its management, and its workings, as Van Dorn could never know them; she knew the people of her section; and to her he must turn when he himself was at a loss, or when anything particularly important was on hand. In the early years of their marriage he had treated her advice so cavalierly, he had arrogated all authority so completely to himself, and carried matters with so high a hand, that she now proffered no assistance, and must be sought if she was to be made use of.

“Going over to the Twin Brothers, are you?” the head of the family asked, with affected carelessness.

“Dear, *dear* Mr. Strong asked us!” said Dorothy. “He says the black men in the mine sing so sweet (or is it ‘sweetly,’ mamma? Is that one of the ‘l-y lys?’” she questioned, parenthetically, of her mother, and receiving an affirmative nod and smile, went on); “and there are funny little black children at the miners’ houses now.”

“If we go before six o’clock we’ll see ’em turn out for drill,” added Donald.

The father frowned; this was not what he wanted.

“You should let the children have their meals in the nursery, Celia. A table with a parcel of noisy youngsters around it is insufferable — we

might as well dine in a kindergarten," he said, sharply.

Dorothy's round cheeks crimsoned helplessly, and the slow, bright tears dropped over them. Even sturdy Don's hand sought, below the table's edge, for his mother's. They had both been so sure of pleasing — and they so seldom pleased.

"Are you troubled about something?" inquired the little mother in that stiff tone of reproof which nothing but defence of her children ever gave her courage to use. Her one hand, out of sight, clasped her son's tremulous little fist; her other gave a quick, reassuring touch to Dorothy's curls.

"Yes, I'm infernally worried. A committee from the Local waited on me to-day, and desired me to use my influence with Mark Strong to get him to ship his darkies back to Alabama. My influence!" And he laughed rather bitterly.

Mrs. Van Dorn studied her husband's face intelligently.

"And you want me to open this matter to Mark Strong?" she said, quietly.

The man fidgeted in his chair; he had neither strength and ability, nor the necessary knowledge, to do without her; nor had he the grace to grant her credit for the help she gave.

"Oh, I don't know," he drawled. "You might mention it to him, if the matter comes up."

Mrs. Van Dorn's lips tightened to a gray line. During the early years of her marriage, she would have hastened to urge her help upon him; now she said, indifferently:

"I shall not mention it to him, unless you desire me to do so."

"Hang it all, Celia, don't be any nastier about the thing than you feel obliged to!" cried Van Dorn, irritably. "I've been confoundedly worried. These men are awful brutes. No doubt you know more about them than I do. You hit it off better with Strong. I think you might help me out, without assuming that pharisaical tone."

Don's small, chubby fist clutched tight around his mother's; Dorothy's tears dried on her heated cheeks, as she stared angrily at the father who was speaking so unkindly to that adored one. Both these little creatures were full of the Van Dorn courage, once offended, once roused.

"Have you little folks had enough lunch now?" inquired the mother, gently. "Run away to Hannah, then, and let her make you tidy for your drive."

And the children went obediently, but slowly, eyes still fixed angrily and doubtfully upon their

father, or questioningly on their mother, as though they thought she might need them to defend her. Van Dorn saw nothing of it. Jane noted with a sarcastic smile, Celia with a painfully swelling heart. But she turned with an unruffled countenance to her husband :

“ I understand that, after all, you do want me to sound Mr. Strong on what he might do about taking back the Union men.”

“ Of course I do — you knew it from the first. It’s your way to pick a man’s remarks to pieces as he makes them.”

Mrs. Van Dorn regarded the spoon in her hand intently. The Van Dorn crest upon it might have been a complicated problem which she was striving to solve. Yet it is doubtful if she saw either spoon or crest, as she answered :

“ It will not be of any use, but it might as well be done. Then you’ll be able to tell your men that you have made every effort in your power.”

“ I need to tell ’em something of the sort,” said Van Dorn, ruefully. “ They’re on my back about half the time, and making life a burden to me. They seem to think that the sight of Mark Strong running an independent mine is bad for the rest of us mine owners.”

Mrs. Van Dorn smiled, a peculiar little smile.

“Mark Strong has always been able to do things which other people can’t do,” she said, briefly.

Her husband looked up angrily, opened his lips, then, as her eyes met his fully and quietly, seemed to think better of it, and said nothing.

The children enjoyed their outing to the full. They were dear little souls, with the rosy, glowing Van Dorn physique, and their mother’s loving heart and sturdy, active, sound mentality. Strong was a prime favourite with both of them. To be where he was, seemed to them delight enough; but when was added the many novel sights and scenes which the Twin Brothers now afforded, their cup of bliss quite ran over.

It was not till the Gloriana party was ready to return home that the subject Van Dorn desired his wife to bring up was broached. The four visitors were seated in the tall trap, Donald beside his aunt, and Dorothy, a bundle of fairy muslins and laces and sweetness, at her mother’s side. Miss Van Dorn looked her best when riding or driving; she was exceedingly fond of horses, a good whip, and enjoyed displaying her abilities in this line.

The little man in gray stood at the wheel, his hand upon the vehicle’s edge, to bid his guests good-bye.

“You seem to be making a success of this,” said

Mrs. Van Dorn, nodding toward the long row of miners' cottages, where negro women washed at the tubs in the back yards, and fat, black babies tumbled about the door-steps. "But do you like it?"

Strong's face contracted for a moment, and then resumed its wonted placidity.

"Like it?" he debated. Then, suddenly turning toward her, "But that's hardly the point. The success is the thing, isn't it?"

"Is it?" asked Mrs. Van Dorn. "Well, perhaps; but Tulley wanted me to sound you on the question of the Union. Of course you know it would simplify matters for the rest of us if you — if you —"

"Fail," put in Strong, with one of his rare laughs. "Well, yes. I believe it would. But I can't fail just to be obliging to my friends."

"Seriously," said Mrs. Van Dorn, "you wouldn't be likely to consider any sort of proposition from the Union, would you?"

"Oh, yes, there's one proposition that I should always consider favourably from the Union. I'd ship these fellows back to Alabama to-morrow, and put my old men in their places at the old wages, with all the old privileges — and some new ones, perhaps — if the Union just said the word."

There was silence for an instant. Celia glanced

down at Strong's face; even Jane Van Dorn turned slightly toward him.

"But I'd have to run my own mine my own way," the quiet voice finished; and there was a quick movement in both of the women before him.

"That brings us to the deadlock which put the Union out of your mine," commented Mrs. Van Dorn. Again her glance travelled over the neat enclosure, the prosperous appearance of everything. Before her mind's eye was a vision of the Gloriana, run down, slovenly and incompetently administered, going to rack as fast as it well could. "I dare say you are making something," she hazarded.

"Of course; at this season, and with prices where they are," Strong returned; "we're doing well."

Jane, from where she sat, slightly turned away, drawing her whip-lash across her horse's flank, suddenly spoke.

"It's a relief to hear somebody talk prosperity," she said. "We have nothing but the wail of hard times at our house."

Mrs. Van Dorn's pale cheek tinged with colour. Her pride was touched. The Gloriana had been a fine paying property when the Twin Brothers was struggling to gain a foothold.

"I fancy times will be better with us soon; we're

profiting somewhat by the good workmen the Twin Brothers turned away," she put in, rather hurriedly.

"I'm glad you got some good men," said Strong, with hearty kindness. "It's an ill wind, indeed, that blows good to nobody."

"Yes," drawled Jane, with sudden inspiration, "Tulley told me the other day that he was hiring the Llewellyn boy, the son of the handsome widow," and she looked amiably down at Strong, then glanced triumphantly at her sister-in-law. "He seems to have taken a fancy to the young fellow, and is going to give him something to do in the office, if he can."

The statement was pure invention, but Jane Van Dorn meant to make it come true. To both of her hearers, for varying reasons, it was unwelcome.

"Julia Copeland has lived in Iroquois for more than twenty years," said Mrs. Van Dorn, softly. "She would hate to move away. She has so many friends here. I was always fond of Julia, myself."

"Oh, Tulley thinks of building a cottage for them near the Gloriana, and selling it to them on very easy terms," expanded Jane, glibly. "But of course that's not moving away from Iroquois."

Mark Strong kept his gaze fixed upon the hub of the wheel beside him. Tulley Van Dorn's assistance

would be a doubtful boon to a woman in Julia Llewellyn's position.

"Well, good-bye. Good-bye, my little sweetheart," to the small, beruffled girl, who poked her chubby face over the side of the high trap, with the utmost haste and hearty good-will, to be kissed by her dear Mr. Strong. "Good-bye, partner," to the white-serge-clad boy. "You're going to come over and help me run the Twin Brothers when you get a little older, aren't you?"

And with much laughter the carriage drove away, the two eager child faces gazing back as far as they could see Mark, the little hands fluttering in repeated farewells.

Strong stood looking after them unseeingly for some time, waving an almost perfunctory hand in response. Julia was leaving his neighbourhood; she was placing herself under the protection of a man whom he despised, a man of whose views concerning women he had not been allowed to remain in ignorance. Well, she was old enough to know her own mind. It was certain that he did not see his way clear to offer advice. And with another sigh he turned and walked slowly in the direction of his own home.

CHAPTER XVI.

FIRE AND TOW

WHETHER Jane Van Dorn had talked to her brother beforehand and knew what his plans were to be, or whether she invented these plans on the spur of the moment, certain it is that a man working in the Gloriana approached Bob Llewellyn the next day with the statement that they were short-handed, and that there would be a chance for a particularly good job for a likely young fellow who could please Mr. Van Dorn.

Upon applying, Bob found that he was not offered the ordinary position of miner. Mr. Van Dorn stated to him that one of his bosses was unsatisfactory; he desired to have a young fellow at hand who would learn the mine and the men, and who could be put into that place at a day's notice.

Poor Bob — poor, crude young fellow; easily deceived, because he was not himself deceitful! He went home to his mother full of pride, telling her that here, at last, was an employer who could

appreciate good men. When had Mark Strong ever called a sixteen-year-old boy into his office and talked to him of being made a boss? It was certain that Strong's best men received only curt and cool commendation. That they prized this more than voluminous praise from anybody else, was something young Robert overlooked.

Julia was uneasy, but she could not bear to dash her boy's enthusiasm.

"All right, Bob," she said, tremulously, smoothing back the thick, dark hair, and looking down into the eyes so like her own. She was giving him his supper. "All right, dear; you're the man of the family, and must decide these things. But I don't like to hear you speak harshly of Mr. Strong. Remember, some folks that are cold and quiet in their way mean better by you than others who say a great deal. You were at the Twin Brothers first, and I guess you found as little injustice there as anywhere."

Bob flushed, and busied himself with his biscuit and butter. Mark Strong's name had been a sore subject since the night when Julia warned the mine owner, and when she had later taxed her son with being of the party who attacked them. Now he wagged his head portentously.

"Never you mind about Strong," he said, boy-

ishly. "Strong'll get met up with. I don't wish him any worse luck than is comin' to him. The Union will fix him and his niggers. But I'm going to buy a cottage from Mr. Van Dorn — did I tell you about that, mother?"

"No — for what?" with vague anxiety.

"Why, for us to live in, of course. Before I'm done with it I'm going to see you living in a finer house than Mark Strong's; but a cottage will do to begin on."

Julia sat down by her boy and watched to see that he had everything he needed, keeping his coffee-cup replenished and his plate supplied with hot biscuit.

"I should think a cottage would do to begin on!" she laughed. "It's rather a large beginning for a boy of your age. What put it into your head, Bob?" Her look was solicitous, as well as fond.

"Mr. Van Dorn. He took me out to see the lot, and there's an apple-tree on it, and two peach-trees, and lots of room for a garden. I'll bet you'll have it just full of flowers by this time next year. He said you could plan the house, if you wanted to. Of course it is to be just so many rooms and all; but you might have little things about it to suit you."

Julia shivered. She had planned one house in her lifetime — a house she never lived in — and it

seemed to be enough. The light went out of her face, the girlish, running laugh out of her voice, as she answered :

“ Oh, almost any place suits me. I don’t believe I would want to be about planning a house before the workmen; it might look like favouritism; and if you get your mates down on you it’s very unpleasant.”

“ I guess they’ll have to stand it,” said Bob, importantly. “ Mr. Van Dorn may make me a boss before fall, he says.”

Van Dorn himself went over to Iroquois to see Bob Llewellyn’s mother. For Tulley Van Dorn, the door to every other sort of ruin opened through his weakness for women. When he attempted to lay hands upon Julia Llewellyn, it was like touching a live wire.

She was Van Dorn’s age exactly, in the meridian of her affluent and most appealing beauty; a tall woman, but so deep-chested and so grandly proportioned that she scarcely looked her height. Hers was the feminine curve, everywhere; the figure was majestic, the head high borne, the features well-nigh perfect; but with an endearing beauty which was maternal, rather than imperial. Her hair was a warm, reddish brown, escaping braids and careful pinning, to turn glowing little ends

of curls about her temples and neck. She had the peculiarly transparent skin which goes with that auburn hair; yet there was a dash of brown in its transparency, which warmed it from waxen beauty to the ripely human. Her eyes were brown, deeply fringed, full of laughter, and shaded by heavy brows; the eye of the earth-born, the nature-woman.

But the chief beauty of Julia Llewellyn's face was her mouth; large, red-lipped, and with generous curves, there was a fullness beneath it, a prominence to its upper lip, which precluded any sharp line of closure. It seemed a mouth made for speech and laughter and kisses, tremulously alive to every human emotion. Those were never the lips which should have been silent, or pressed together in anguish over secrets they dared not reveal.

Beautiful, appealing, richly feminine, tenderly human, to Van Dorn's grossly self-indulgent, ungoverned, inflammable nature, Julia Llewellyn was as a torch. His first interview with her settled many things in the destiny of a dozen people seemingly not concerned with either one of these principals. She had that crowning and irresistible charm to a man of Van Dorn's type; she was plainly a pure woman — and unprotected.

The little cottage was not finished; Bob came and went between Iroquois and the Gloriana by trolley,

and Van Dorn's sudden, overwhelming passion had little chance to feed itself by sight of its object.

"I wish you'd give young Llewellyn's mother some sewing to do," the owner of the Gloriana said carelessly one day to his wife.

"I do," said Mrs. Van Dorn, simply; and for some reason her husband was suddenly abashed. Yet he returned to the charge with:

"Oh, well, I mean rather specially just now. We've got the boy in the office, filling in some time in a clerk's place; and I thought it — er, if she was sewing here in the house, you see, why, they could come and go together."

It was an absurd speech. Nothing but his infatuation would have pushed him into making it. Even his cheek reddened as he concluded it.

"I do not want Julia Llewellyn sewing here in this house," said Mrs. Van Dorn, slowly and distinctly.

"Oh, you needn't speak like that," demurred her husband. "The woman's a perfectly reputable person." (As though his endorsement could help to prop any woman's reputation.) She's a perfectly proper woman to have in the house, if that's what you mean."

They were alone, the opportunity seemed a suitable one, and Celia Van Dorn answered, with a

certain flat monotony of tone which terror lent her :

“ It’s because Julia Llewellyn is a good woman — and a very beautiful one — that I don’t think she is a suitable person to sew in my house.”

Van Dorn made no reply of any sort at the moment; but he was so little disturbed by the rebuff that he recommenced the attack as soon as the widow and her son were settled in their new home.

“ Celia,” he opened, “ it isn’t often that I ask anything of you; but I wish you’d do me the favour to go and see Mrs. Llewellyn.”

The pale little woman turned a face of amazement from the book she was reading.

“ Tulley!” she murmured, remonstrantly; “ call on her, do you mean? Why, Julia would think I was crazy.”

“ I don’t see why you talk like that,” the man complained. “ You speak as though she were an inferior, a person whom it would disgrace you to visit.”

“ I don’t,” returned his wife, with careful moderation. “ I said nothing of the sort. Julia Copeland and I were girls together. She is a good woman, and has had a hard time; but she earns her living, and is busy all day — she doesn’t expect me to call on her.”

"Well, Celia," persisted Van Dorn, "I got young Llewellyn from the Twin Brothers when Strong brought the negroes in, and I prize him very much. He's an unusual boy, and is going to be very useful to me. Besides, he's Owen Llewellyn's nephew, and very prominent with the Union; and the Union is giving me a lot of trouble these days. I — he — I don't want to lose him."

"Oh, I guess you're in no danger of losing him," said Mrs. Van Dorn, upon whose face a look of disgust had settled. "I'll talk to the boy when I'm down at the Gloriana next time — I think that would be a more reasonable thing to do."

Van Dorn flashed a look of hatred at his wife's bent head, as she lifted her book and prepared to continue her reading.

"Will you call on her?" he asked, abruptly.

"I will not," she answered, briefly, and without looking up.

"Not if I ask you to — beg you to — specially?"

"*Because* you ask me to, and beg me specially to, I will not — and it's reason enough," said pale little Celia Van Dorn, dropping her book in her lap, and facing her husband fully.

"By God, some women have the nerve!" he ejaculated. "If a man were as eaten up by jealousy as all that, he'd at least make a stagger at trying to

conceal it — but a woman — bah! You make me sick!”

Celia rose.

“Tulley,” she said, “I doubt the expediency of attempting to say anything to you; yet I must try. Julia Llewellyn is a good woman —”

“Who, in the Lord’s name, said anything else?” blustered her husband. “What a fuss over nothing! What a tempest in a teapot! Because the woman’s a beautiful creature, all you spiteful little baggages must be pointing your fingers at her if a man attempts to do her a kindness. That’s a jealous woman all over.”

“I have only said that Julia was a good woman. I have confidence that she will remain a good woman, in spite of any advances from —”

She broke off, and stood looking down so long it almost seemed as though she would not continue. She was thinking of the children, and reminding herself that this was their father. Suddenly she raised her head.

“I think Julia will always be a good woman,” she went on, bravely, “in spite of the many advances which you know have been made to her. It is true, as you say, that she is very handsome, and her position has been very trying. I’ll not go to see her, but I’ll go to see some one who will defend her.”

She picked up her book, and was leaving the room, when her husband put himself in her way, his blond face darkened with anger.

"Who?" he managed to articulate, in spite of the passion which choked him.

"Somebody who will defend her," repeated his wife, monotonously, and made as though to push past him. Van Dorn grasped her wrist, and shook her.

"Answer me!" he shouted, getting his voice at last. "Who is this you are going to see about — about — about your private affairs — and mine?"

Celia pulled back with a sudden wrench, and jerked her wrist free. She was escaping from him in silence, when he caught her dress, and held her.

"I know who it is," he sneered; "it's a man that I'm going to break — that I'm going to ruin, as sure as my name's Van Dorn. You think you'll run to Mark Strong with this matter, and that he'll set it straight — well, he won't."

With that he released her; and she fled with a white face, and a red mark upon the wrist which he had clutched.

She ran up-stairs to the nursery — in all this big house which had been her father's home, the one place that she felt she could call her own, since

neither Van Dorn nor his sister ever cared to go there. The children were out with their nurse. She moved wistfully about the room picking up and handling the toys they had dropped. She went to the closet, upon pretence of seeing whether the coats and hats were out, and the little wearers certainly gone abroad; but in reality to touch and gaze upon the small garments and belongings hanging there. At such times as these, Celia fled instinctively to her little ones.

Lacking their presence, she sat long thinking over the matter. She had not been Tulley's wife for eight years without learning what such indications meant; but the accompaniments of this matter were frightful to her. She wondered if it would be well for her to break her word to Tulley, and go to talk to the woman. But no, who could tell just what the conditions there might be? She must not, in any case, appear as the jealous, slighted wife; that, besides being unwelcome and untrue, she felt would not further her ends.

Then she began mentally going over all the old friends. This one was married; that one was gone away. Mrs. Kesterson, whose kindness to Julia had never failed, was in Europe. The pastor of the church they both attended was a young fellow, lately come to the place. Everything pushed her

back upon the conclusion that there was no one so hopeful as Mark Strong.

With Celia Van Dorn, to think was to act; and she had scarcely made up her mind to this purpose before she was at the telephone, inquiring where Mr. Strong was, and when she could see him. Finding that he would be in Iroquois that afternoon, she appointed a time and place, and went down herself "to do a little shopping." In due course they met.

"Don't you remember when we three were young together, and all belonged to the same Sunday school?" Celia made appeal to her old friend, as they walked back and forth in the garden of the parsonage. "We were in the same Bible class, and we called each other Mark, and Julia, and Celia." Her pale little face turned to him in deep earnestness.

Strong nodded. One might have guessed from the expression of his eyes that he was thinking of Julia Copeland as she had been in those days.

"Father used to think so much of Julia's father, Doctor Copeland," the little woman went on, bravely. "He said the doctor was too good a man to ever get rich; and you know there was nothing left to poor Julia. She's had a hard battle."

"Mrs. Van Dorn, I do not see very clearly what it is you want of me. They say that every good

woman is at heart a match-maker, and that she believes a good marriage will mend all evils; but if you're wanting to make a match between Julia and me, why, it's —" they stopped walking by a mutual impulse, and swung around facing each other — "it's — too late."

Mark spoke out with sudden bitterness. The night when he had so nearly asked Julia to be his wife came back to him. He was too loyal to tell of it, even to justify himself in kind, sterling Celia's eyes; but the remembrance of it gave a hard edge to his voice.

"Mark, I can't just tell you the particular reason I had for coming to-day," poor Celia said, looking in his face. "I think perhaps I was mistaken in doing so; but I meant well. There are certain things surrounding Julia where she now is — things that — oh, I can't say just what; but I thought if you, as an old friend, would only go and see her, it might make all the difference."

"I can't," said Strong, turning away, though his cheek grew paler; "I can't go and see her. There's something that *I* may explain to *you* some day, that stands between us. I would do anything I could for her."

"Would you speak to Bob?" asked Mrs. Van Dorn, sadly.

Strong shrugged his shoulders, and his face darkened. Here, at least, there was no loyal love to restrain him.

"The young scoundrel was an employé of mine for some time," he said, "and he has made one or two attempts on my life—I don't believe I'm the proper person to talk to him."

Celia guessed that he thought the mother concerned in some way in the boy's animosity; the full depth of the guilt which he fancied lay at Julia's door, she could not guess.

"She's a good woman, Mark," Van Dorn's wife said, wistfully. "She's very large-hearted, and generous, and kind. I would not pay too much attention to appearances."

A trust so much stronger than his, though, as he believed it to be, unfounded, touched Strong deeply. He turned and put out both hands to the little woman.

"I'm sorry, Celia," he said, with the indescribable softening of the face which was not quite a smile, and which yet partook of the nature of one, "I'm sure sorry that I can't do just what you ask of me. But no—no. I'm not the one to send to Julia Llewellyn. Like the rest of us, she must work out her own salvation."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SPARK IS STRUCK

JULIA hurried on her way up from town, because she had met Mr. Van Dorn on the street in Iroquois, and he had asked if he could not bring her home in his auto. She treated the proposition as a jest, and expressed a fear of the vehicle.

"I'll drive next time," said Van Dorn, gravely.

"There won't be any next time," retorted Julia, putting aside his unwelcome attentions quite as a woman of his own circle might have done.

"There always is, when a man is persistent enough," declared Van Dorn, almost doggedly.

So she had taken the trolley, in fear and trembling, got off at the foot of the hill, looking over her shoulder and fancying she heard footsteps, and, with a growing relief, had hastened up to her own little place. She was within ten steps of the gate when a man arose from the side of the grassy path and confronted her. It was Van Dorn.

"An auto isn't half a bad thing to have," he ob-

served, raising his hat, and then trying to get possession of her packages. "You see, it brings you to the place ahead of the other party."

The colour deepened and deepened on Julia's cheek; but she obstinately refused to recognize the situation.

"No, don't take them, Mr. Van Dorn," she protested, alluding to the packages. "I'm almost home."

"So I see. I wish I were. I'm tired. May I come in and sit on your porch?"

The issue was squarely before her. Van Dorn had chosen this spot for the cottage, removed from all the other miners; and yet she might be certain that some one would see them, some one would carry the news, if she allowed Bob's employer to enter.

"I don't think you want to do that, Mr. Van Dorn," she said, gently. "I don't belong to the class of people whom you make your friends. It would excite remark. It — it — it isn't a proper thing in any way."

He stopped, the gate in his hand, and looked at her.

"So you won't invite me in," he commented, with some irritation in his tone.

Julia trembled. Bob's future lay in this man's hands. She must not interfere with her boy's

prospects. Van Dorn was a little foolish; he could be made to see the right way without her being offensive. Thus she paltered with her womanhood and her better impulses.

"I didn't say I wouldn't invite you in," she remonstrated. "I said you didn't want to come in. And that is true. You know, Mr. Van Dorn, that your friendship could be nothing but a disgrace to me."

She looked appealingly up at him. Her fingers upon the pickets trembled exceedingly.

"What a pretty hand you've got," murmured Van Dorn, gazing down at it. "And see the little forefinger all cut up with needle-pricks. That's a shame. A hand like that ought never to have anything to do but look pretty."

Julia drew the member away so suddenly that the gate swung shut between them. Somewhere in the depths of her desperation she found the ghost of a frightened laugh.

"What nonsense!" she said, faintly. "You don't mean to be unkind when you speak to me so — of course you're just joking — I know that — but if anybody else heard you, they might think — they might think —"

She came to a helpless pause, aware, in a sick anguish of terror and apprehension, that the man

before her was not listening, had not heard a word.

"You refuse to invite me in, still, do you?" he asked. "You don't think I'm good enough to come into your house."

"The house belongs to you," faltered Julia, "and that's what makes it unkind for you to insist. You force me to remember that I'm under so many obligations to you. I'm really so grateful, and I don't want to do anything that would seem ungrateful; but — but —"

Van Dorn leaned across the gate and caught her hands.

"Julia," he said, brusquely, "I'm coming to see you — here — in your own house. And you're going to invite me to come. I'm in earnest, for once in my life; and — well — that's to be the way of it."

He spoke with confidence. Jane Van Dorn's appeal to him for assistance had come at an unfortunate time. Always dependent on some woman or women, his wife had just then definitely ceased offering him that counsel and support in his practical affairs which he would only receive from her when she thrust it upon him. He had not loved Celia; he had married the plain, awkward little Western girl purely on account of her money; yet it could not be denied that he came to have a certain reliance

upon her, and a certain satisfaction in her society. This now was gone, and it left him ready to seek that same support elsewhere. A notorious affair of his with the daughter of one of his employés had just closed as such affairs do close — most unpleasantly — and been followed by the woman's marriage and departure for San Francisco. He was, then, without an amour, and without a wife; and Julia Llewellyn's appeal to him — the appeal of a woman who had both beauty and intelligence — was most powerful.

The last thing that his sister could have supposed, when she planned the downfall of the other woman through his agency, was that she was sending him into any danger; but those big, soft, changeful eyes, that mobile mouth, with its odd fullness, and its curves of lurking sweetness and laughter, had begun to haunt his dreams. It needed only that the woman herself should prove loath, that she should be absolutely unapproachable, to complete his infatuation.

"Good night," he said, turning away; "but I'm coming again — and again — and again, until you get tired and invite me in."

With the long, tremulous sigh of a child dismayed, exhausted, the woman gathered up her scattered bundles from the garden path.

"I'll not go inside till Bob comes," she murmured. "I hate to be alone in the house. Alone."

She had repeated the word, quite unconsciously; and now as she sat, she said it again — "alone." That is what this meant, this and similar advances which had followed poor Julia's beauty and her broken fortunes. It is what she would have been protected from as Mark Strong's wife; it was what came to her because she was alone. The man who had just descended the hill was gone clean out of her thoughts. Before her rose the plain, stern, quiet face that would have meant everything in life to her clinging, voluble tenderness.

"I wonder if he ever thinks about me — this way, I mean," she whispered in the dusk. "I wonder if he will ever know the truth about that night when I tried to warn him. How different life is from the way we think of it when we are young." And Julia sighed again.

Then she laughed out suddenly and joyously, for Bob had slipped over the side fence of the garden and stolen upon her, dreaming there upon the porch.

"Been breaking me up at the bargain-counters, I'll bet," he said, as he once more collected her forgotten parcels to carry them into the house for her.

And Julia laughed again, at his masculine assumption that he was the head of the house, and supplied her with shopping funds.

Meantime more and more dissatisfaction spread in the Iroquois district. There lay Strong's settlement of blacks like a plague-spot, to the thinking of the Union; peaceful, prosperous, surrounded by its dead-line, but enclosing harmony and hard work; and showing to all the world that a mine could be profitably run without the Union.

Strong held rigidly to the Union scale; he gave every privilege to his negroes which the Union demanded for their white men; and he had more work for his employés in the Twin Brothers than any mine in the Iroquois district was giving to its labourers. Is it any wonder that they longed to crumple his settlement together, and thrust it down the throat of his mine?

The men of the Gloriana went about with the largest of chips upon their shoulders. There was scarcely anything Van Dorn could do, which did not give offence. Kesterson, of the Culleoka, was in Europe, and his superintendent had his hands full. The men struck at one time, and were out three days, because a driver — a new hand who had been but six months in the mine — refused to go down one of the entries, declaring that it was unsafe. The

fire boss, and their legitimate inspector, men holding State license for such work, and with long experience in it, went over the ground and pronounced it perfectly safe; but the driver felt it in his bones somewhere that it was not, communicated his scare to a dozen others, and the Culleoka was on strike, and losing three hundred dollars a day for its stockholders.

Van Dorn's men had been out, on one small pretext and another, for periods varying from two days to two weeks.

"Blamed if it ain't like a durned off an' on scrappin' match, workin' in the Gloriana these days," said Dave Trifford. "Sometimes we're a-hittin' him, and sometimes he's a-hittin' us; and about half the time we're settin' off, each feller in his corner of the ring, lookin' at the other one."

A committee from the Union had come to confer with the superintendent of the Gloriana. Van Dorn shoved things about on his desk, half-rose from his seat, sat down again, and fidgeted with his inkstand. He was full of that uneasy cordiality which he always showed to his inferiors from whom he desired a favour.

"Well. Well. Is there anything that I can do for you to-day?" he opened, with loud cheerfulness.

"The Local had a meetin' last night, Mr. Van Dorn," said the spokesman, rising, "and it sent a committee here to see about young Llewellyn bein' put in as boss."

Van Dorn stiffened, and looked darkly from one to the other.

"Well," he snarled, and the monosyllable sounded scarce the same as the one he had used a moment before.

"Well, sir, the Union can't endorse young Llewellyn for that position, and the Union respectfully requests you not to put him in it."

Van Dorn looked up and down the row of faces, alien, inferior, without interest or plea to him. He would have been glad to tell them so, to have them thrown out of his office; but some enlightening spark of reason and caution held him back.

"What's the matter with young Llewellyn?" he inquired. "He's a Union man. I supposed you fellows would be delighted. What more do you want?"

"Well, we want a good deal more than that," said the spokesman, who had not resumed his seat. "We don't want no seventeen-year-old boys put in for bosses in no mine that we have to work in. He's set over men old enough to be his father. Union or no Union, they won't stand for it. He

ain't passed no State examination for such, and we won't stand for it."

"Who's running the Gloriana?" inquired Van Dorn, suddenly.

"W-e-l-l, you are — I suppose," said the chairman of the committee, reluctantly. "But the Union sends the men down into your mine, and they risk their lives there, and the Union's got a big word to say about how the mines shall be run."

"The Union be d——d!" said Van Dorn, concisely.

The committee was on its feet in a moment. One might have suspected that the appointment of Bob Llewellyn to a position for which he was certainly unfit was taken as a pretext for something which they were anxious to accomplish.

"Oh, that's the word, is it?" said the spokesman. "You won't make any change? Well, we have this to say: You can give what you please, of your own, to the folks that please you; but the lives and safety of the men in this mine are going to be looked after by the Union, and you can't give 'em to your pets."

A strike at the present time was by no means what Van Dorn wanted. He controlled himself by a mighty effort.

"I am willing to arbitrate the matter," he said,

sulkily. "I supposed Llewellyn would suit the Union. If he doesn't, we'll talk it over."

The chairman evidently wished that he had got his committee out of the room before Van Dorn made this concession.

"All right, Mr. Van Dorn," he said, "I'm glad you see it so clearly. You can give that woman any gift you like — a cottage here or there is not what the Union is noticing — but the lives and safety of your men —"

The speaker was bending over to pick up his hat, when Van Dorn's fist shot out like a pile-driver, and caught him on the side of his head. He went down in a huddle, among the other men's shoes, and lay there for the moment that it took for the owner of the *Gloriana* to leap across the railing and start forward to kick the prostrate figure.

"You dog! You hound!" he snarled between his shut teeth.

The committee closed together before their fallen leader, and Van Dorn drew back from their menacing faces.

"He had no right to speak of my private affairs," said the employer, brought to sudden realization of the injudiciousness of his action.

"You had no right to hit a man that wasn't

looking for it," growled an old miner, as the wounded man struggled to his feet.

Again Van Dorn's wrath blazed out.

"I'll kick a dog like that everywhere I find him," he said, furiously.

The words had hardly left his lips, when the injured man rushed in on him, head down and arms wide-spread. He caught the mine owner about the middle, pinioning his arms to his sides, holding him helpless as a child.

"Now, then, I'll smash you, you damned, sneaking, overbearing brute!" he roared, lifting the tall man high in the air, and making ready to bring him down across the railing.

It looked like sure death, and only the restraining hands of his own committee saved the chairman from becoming a murderer. With a final shake, he dropped Van Dorn, all dignity and elegance shaken out of him, into his own office-chair.

"I ain't done with you, you sneaking coward," he growled, as he was dragged away by his companions.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LABOUR AT PLAY

THE Union offered entertainment to the members of the various Locals, in the shape of a basket picnic in a grove about a mile and a half from Iroquois.

There was a small hand-bill, or dodger, of a dubious pale red, printed at the shop of a couple of Union printers who had set up in business for themselves. This document made the usual statement that "The committee will spare no pains to make the occasion pleasant. Good speaking. Good music. Come one, come all."

Swings had been put up in the tall trees; a band-stand was already on the grounds, and a latticed arbour or two where lunch might be eaten if the day proved rainy. The floor of the dancing pavilion was well salted; barrels of ice-water stood about with tin dippers chained to their edges. There were the usual venders of peanuts and lemonade; and Yount had sent out three barrels of beer. This latter feature the women very much deprecated.

"It's bad enough when Gus keeps the beer in the saloon where the men can go and hunt it," said Mrs. Joe Ackerman; "but when he sends it out to hunt the men, I think it's right hard on us women."

Many of the miners about Iroquois were farmers in a small way. During the summer the coal mines would offer them three or four idle days in every week, and these the thrifty utilized in tilling the soil. Some of the men had been farmers' sons, and had inherited or bought little patches of ground; some of them rented from the mine owners for whom they worked. And so it came about that, tied at the grove's edge this Fourth of July, was every imaginable vehicle that a rural community could send. Shaky little spring wagons, lumbering old farm wagons, sulkies, jump-seat buggies, buckboards, they stood about in a ragged circle, with the horses and mules which had hauled them there munching corn or oats out of the backs of their beds.

Some of the younger men of the Union marched out in a procession, headed by the band, and carrying banners. First came the ensign of the Local, with an American flag beside it, and then a banner or two with labour mottoes upon them, a square of muslin which boldly announced itself "For Liberty or Death."

The members of the various Locals wore badges

— would it have been a labour parade without badges? These were of silk ribbon, with red-white-and-blue rosettes at the top, on the back of which a safety-pin was whipped, so that they could be attached to the coat; and they bore, generally, the number of the Local, and sometimes a motto or name.

The men trudged in the dust and heat, exchanging reminiscences of the better state of affairs the year before, when they had had the use of the mules and wagons from their various mines for their jollification.

There's no use saying that a strike's all fun," argued Dempsey. "I mind the elegant time I had last year, with money in my pocket, and a span of mules to drive. We had straw in the bottom of the wagon, and 'leven boys and 'leven girls to ride in it — say, I bet I'll never have a better time than I did last Fourth."

"Maybe you'll have a better time to-night," suggested Corrigan, who was walking beside him, and the two fell silent.

"Where's Bob Llewellyn?" shouted a young fellow from the rear of the procession.

"He's comin' over from the Gloriana by trolley; his mother's with him," came the answer from some unseen source.

Occasionally a sandwich man came through the crowd crying his wares.

"Say, Ikey," the jest would run, "do you belong to the Union? Is them goods Union made?"

"Ah, yes, they're made of rubber and cotton batting, according to the Union regulations," question and answer would fly about his head as the leathery sandwiches were disposed of.

Taking it all together, it was an extremely orderly crowd. There was little money to spend, though the strike had been on in the Gloriana, the Big Muddy, the Black Diamond, and three other mines, for only six weeks. Still, under it all, giving a strained expectancy to the humdrum gaiety of the occasion, was the knowledge on the part of a few extremists, of some wild work planned for the night of the Fourth, and the apprehension, on the part of the quieter element, that this day's jollification would lead to rioting by the time night fell.

While the women were getting the baskets unpacked, and spread upon the grass here and there, some devoted victim read the Declaration of Independence from the band-stand. Like Signior Benedick, nobody marked him; and long after his droning had ceased, mothers continued to tell their children to "hush and listen to what the gentleman's a-saying."

Then a small boy with a large head recited a poem in which he had been carefully drilled, and which required seven extremely angular gestures to make its meaning plain. This having been received with suitable applause, Owen Llewellyn mounted the steps of the platform.

"I don't often speak in public," he began, looking his auditors over with that simple directness which belongs to a man who works with his hands. "I'm not much on speech-making; but I've got something to say to you people here in the Iroquois district that can't just as well be said by somebody else. I'm district president of the Mine Workers' Union. This here district is under my charge. Most of the men in this district are on strike. There are them that have blamed the strike on me."

His big dark eyes began to glow, and to roam over his audience seeking for that responsive countenance to which the orator always addresses his most telling remarks. The benches in front of the stand had filled up; men were listening to him with attention, and the women paused with cake, or pie, or glasses of "jell" in their hands, and drew a faltering step or two nearer.

"Some folks have blamed it on me," he repeated, "and they're right. They can just blame it on Owen Llewellyn. I read in the paper the other day

where Terry Powderly was givin' out to the reporter that strikes were played out, that a strike was no way for men to get their rights. Well, Terry can talk — that's what he can do. He was brought up to that business. He never done a day's work in his life."

There was a scattering laugh among the auditors.

"Now I can work better than I can talk; but I'm right here to take the responsibility of this strike on my shoulders, and to tell you that I don't think like Powderly does."

This was answered with, "Aw, who's Powderly?"

"He's a blamed Knights of Labour, and the Knights of Labour are dead! Powderly's a dead one — he's a was — let him rest!"

"Well, then, we'll let Powderly rest, and I'll talk to you about the strike," the speaker went on. "Lots of you men can remember, 'cause it's not so very long ago, when you were not allowed to load anything but lump coal. You dug the fine coal, and the owners sold the fine coal, but the only thing that was weighed, and you was paid for, was the lump. Who got you pay for your fine coal and your screenings? The Union. How did the Union get it? By jaw-work, like Terry Powderly uses? Not much. The Union got you pay for all the coal you

dug, by striking — striking. I was in the strike at Dusky Diamond, and we stayed out till we broke the old man, on that very account. Now, there's not a mine in the district, there's not a mine in the State, there's not a mine in the United States, that doesn't pay its men for every pound of coal they dig. And they pay 'cause the Union knew how to strike."

The men were getting interested. A score or more of the older miners crowded to the front benches and sat mutely, their shoulders slouched forward, and their eyes fixed upon the face of the speaker. There they were, clods that had been thrown out shapen by the ploughshare of labour, and who now, stiffened in their uncouth form by the hardening years, could never be moulded to symmetry and grace; toilers in the dark and chill, that others may sit warm in the light, members of the vast dumb majority, part and parcel of the inarticulate many who wrestle and strive and endure ceaselessly, that the race may flower in the expressive few. Surely the feeling heart must always be touched at sight of these old fellows with the childishly earnest, appealing eyes; these whose marred faces, knotted, toil-cramped hands and ungracious bodies often signify minds as little supple and alert, and for whom whatever economic revolu-

tions and improvements may come, will come too late.

Now, they fixed their gaze intently on Owen Llewellyn's face, as he spoke:

"We used to be sent into dangerous mines, and not a one of us dared say his soul was his own about it. To-day the Union demands that a mine inspector shall have a State license, and know his business — but the Union didn't get where it could demand that by sitting down and throwing bouquets at the owners. It got there by striking. There's many a fat old mine owner sitting up clipping coupons off of his bonds, that made his money, not out of the mine at all, but out of the store that they used to keep chugged up against the side of the mine, and force you to go there and buy every bite you eat and every rag you wore, at a hundred per cent. profit to them. I mind old Steffens that kept the company store at Dusky Diamond. There was always a loaded Winchester in reach of his hand in the store; and he never drove in his little old spring wagon without a gun between his knees. Every clerk he had went armed, and a loaded rifle handy behind the counter. Why — why — why? They said it was because the miners were liable to come in drunk and rob the store; but they knew mighty well the grievance the men had against them — they knew

they *ought* to be shot — that's why they were afraid they would be. Did the Union jump on them for it? Well, I guess. And how did it jump? With tracts, and pretty talk, and arbitration? Not much. It struck for the privilege of buying where and what the men chose, and it's got it. Why, in them days it was hard work to strike, at the side of what it is now. Often we didn't have enough in the treasury to pay the members strike money out of. The men were fleeced out of what little they made, at the company's store; and when we'd strike, they couldn't get far enough away from their mines to get another job, nor hold out long enough to do much good. But we just set our teeth an' stuck in our claws, and we struck, and we struck — and we *kept* striking — until we made ourselves respected."

"That's right, — we did!" shouted an enthusiastic member, leaping upon a bench.

"The owners used to put up shacks that they wouldn't 'a' been willing to stable their mules in, and rent 'em to their men for ten dollars a month. They kept us without work, while they had us hired and tied so we couldn't get away; but we've climbed to where we are now, by way o' the strike; and we'll climb a notch higher before we follow Terry Powderly and throw away that same.

Labour against capital is the dumb man against the man of speech; and if we don't strike — we'll never get anywhere. We'll still be the dirt under the feet of such men as Strong, and Van Dorn, and old man Kesterson."

The orator of the day was being congratulated, when his sister-in-law and nephew entered the grove. Julia's greeting was somewhat constrained; there were things which she feared Owen knew, and which she fancied he might resent.

"Well, how goes it over 'at the Gloriana?" the big Welshman inquired of the boy.

"Why, I'm sorry the men were called out, Uncle Owen," Bob answered, with his usual frankness. "I was wishing that I could get you to come and help arbitrate it. You know the trouble was over Mr. Van Dorn wanting to put me in as boss."

"Oh, your granny!" laughed the uncle. "The men in the Gloriana know what they're about. That serves as well as anything else to call the boys out." Then, bending lower, and speaking in his nephew's ear, "We've got to break Mark Strong. He's been running along smooth and steady for a year, with his niggers. We've got to break him, or the Union itself's broken in the Iroquois district. It won't take men like Van Dorn and Kesterson and the rest of

them long to look at him, and see that the Union can be made a monkey of. He's got to go."

"You'll take lunch with us, Owen," put in Julia, encouraged by her brother-in-law's friendly bearing toward her son.

"Well, I promised Joe Ackerman," said the Welshman.

"That'll be all right," declared Mrs. Joe, coming up opportunely. "We'll put our table-cloths together and make one long table of it; won't we, Julia?"

So the cloths were laid edge to edge, and many a guest besides Llewellyn gathered about them. The children were calling from group to group, the women were exchanging bits of cake and recipes, the gathering might have been a grange, in some rural district, rather than a celebration by an association of miners on a strike, and about to break out into violence.

"I don't see much of you since you went over to the Gloriana," said Mrs. Joe Ackerman to Bob's mother. "You like it over there?"

Julia looked down; she appeared harassed, and ill at ease.

"Oh, yes, we like it well enough," she admitted. "I hate to be so far from Iroquois."

"But then the trolley runs close to you," supplied

comfortable Mrs. Joe. "When we're out on the farm, I feel as if it didn't matter whether the mines was open or closed. I tell Joe we could make as good a living off the top of the ground as he can get out from under it." And she chuckled a little at her own wit.

"Uncle Owen," said Bob, in a low tone, "I want to get a chance to talk to you. You know I'm a good Union man; but — well — I want to ask you some questions."

Questions of this sort were exactly what Owen Llewellyn didn't intend to hear or answer. He knew exactly what "unauthorized" violence was afoot for this night; he had the affairs of his district in his hands; and he regarded the whole machinery as working well to pay out one personal spite which he held against Mark Strong. To say that he realized this, would not be just. His recent speech had been made in all sincerity. The statements it contained were true. There was one fatal lack: he told what the Union had secured in the past through strikes; he failed to tell what the Union was now striving to secure by the same means.

In this lay the shame and the undoing of organized labour in the Iroquois district at that time. It had no grievance. It let the world say that, like

Jeshurun, it had waxed fat, and was kicking therefor.

Because he didn't intend to counsel Bob, because he knew already what part Bob had taken and was taking in the affairs of the Union, Owen Llewellyn answered, easily:

"There's no hurry about them questions of yours, Bob. I'll be spending a week with you next month — I guess the Gloriana will be working by that time — and we'll talk things over like we used to."

Bob felt that next month would be too late for his perplexities; but there was laid upon him the responsibility of the young male not to admit as much.

"All right," he said, gravely, and addressed himself to Mrs. Ackerman's very excellent lunch.

The year since the close of the Twin Brothers had cut off Robert Llewellyn almost entirely from his uncle's society; it had kept him more directly and continuously with his mother than he had ever been before, since in leaving her patrons she had been obliged to take her work home, and not go out by the day as formerly. The boy was showing the effect of this association very plainly; while Julia, most pliable of creatures, was a different woman, removed from Owen Llewellyn's influence. It might be conjectured that even Van Dorn's ad-

miration, base as it was, much as it repelled her, had done its part toward lifting up her drooping spirit, and healing that poor, wounded, crushed, innocent vanity without which a woman is almost unwomanly.

The continual harping on the idea that she was slighted, which Owen Llewellyn and his family had indulged in before poor Julia, was blighting and disintegrating to her character. She was all love; and when some crude, brutally frank creature held up before her the image of herself as a soft fool, thrust out, passed over, not desired, and willing to lick the hand that struck at her, she was quite undone.

So, in spite of fate, her year at the Gloriana, in her own pretty little cottage with Bob, had been a happy one, and had left her full of motherly pride and growing self-respect.

"You're in the tableaux to-night, ain't you?" Llewellyn said to his sister-in-law when they parted after the picnic was over, and the various vehicles straggling away.

Bob flashed a quick look at his uncle, which meant that Owen knew of the attack that was to be made on Strong, and the reason for Julia's being kept out of the way.

"Yes," she said. "Bob and I are in the same tableau," then deprecated: "I think it's ridiculous

for a woman of my age to be posing around and dressing up that way."

"Of your age," cut in Owen, smiling kindly upon her, his warm dark eyes glowing. "Well you don't look it — not a minute, sis."

There was this to be said for the Llewellyns, that they had always loved and admired and been proud of beautiful, superior Julia, however unfortunate their method of dealing with her and her affairs might have been. Even poor Jack's shortcomings were not more as a husband than as a man. He had failed with himself, before he failed with her.

Julia smiled back at her brother-in-law gratefully.

"'Twouldn't be so absurd, maybe, if Bob wasn't in it, too," she allowed.

"Bob's in it, is he?" repeated the uncle. "Well, Robert Llewellyn," falling behind the others and grasping Bob's hand, "see that you play your part well to-night. You need to act the man."

The words were said with dark significance, and a sudden, ominous gravity.

"He's to be a sailor," called Julia, gaily, from the basket which she was packing. "Will you be there, Owen?"

"No," said the tall, dark-browed man, gazing

intently at her kneeling figure, "I've got important business somewhere else."

And somehow Julia looked up startled, tried to laugh, and fell suddenly silent and thoughtful.

Four o'clock saw all the families off the picnic-ground, the dancing-pavilion in full swing, and the beer which good Mrs. Joe had resented, exhausted and replaced, accompanied by stronger waters. Midnight saw couples still dancing, but marked the absence of some of the wildest among the revellers. They had gone elsewhere, bent upon graver matters.

CHAPTER XIX.

A VERY PARTICULAR JOB

ABOUT the time Strong brought the negroes in, some questionable proceeding began at the Gloriana. Van Dorn admitted freely, and most imprudently, that the mine was making no money; yet he started out on an extensive career of repairs, even adding to the already costly outside plant necessary for a mine.

Strong was having a new washer put in, which was to cost him ten thousand dollars. Van Dorn eclipsed it with plans for a twenty-thousand dollar washer. On pretext that the mine must have a thorough retimbering, but really to give the manager a free hand for his extraordinary improvements, the men were turned out of the Gloriana, and held idle a great part of the early summer. There was nobody about to criticize, or so Van Dorn thought; but the very carpenters who worked upon the structures laughed at him.

He methodically insured and re-insured as the

work advanced, since he was his own contractor; and the strike found him with his buildings completed, and policies in hand for nearly thirty thousand dollars more than he had carried at the beginning of the year.

Among other follies, he developed a plan for a model boarding-house for his men. He said, from the first, that if there should be a strike in the Gloriana which forced him to bring in non-Union labour, it would be white men of intelligence. This last was a side blow at Strong, for he neglected no opportunity to sneer at the little man in gray nowadays.

For the benefit of these problematical workmen, this big, pretentious edifice, with a sarcastic resemblance to Mark Strong's Queen Anne mansion, was built very near the mine — too near, most people thought, for it was well-nigh in the yard. The inside of this building was left almost without finish, and the joke went among the carpenters that it would be dangerous to let three people get together in any of the up-stairs rooms, for they'd make the ceiling below sag. Yet this structure carried its considerable portion of the new insurance.

In short, Van Dorn was contemplating a thing which has been done before. He was scheming to induce some needy soul to burn the outside plant

of the Gloriana, with its heavy insurance upon the mass of spurious new structure; the crime once laid to the door of the Union and the striking miners — an obvious conclusion — their power would be broken in the Iroquois district, and two birds thus fall to one stone. At the worst, he would be permitted to declare military law, and make his reprisals as in time of war.

From the original planning of this crime, there had been but a step to the scheme for doubling the insurance which he would receive for the burned plant. His thought ran:

“If a fellow’s going into the thing — and when I do go into it, I do no more than plenty of owners have done before me while fighting a strike — if I’m going into it, I may as well make it pay. The Gloriana’s run down till it’s ruined, anyway you look.”

And the day after, he began work on his new sham washer.

Once decided upon the matter, he was not long in finding the apt tool to his purpose. This was a man who had been in the Gloriana for nearly a year, acting as weigh master, pit boss, and straw boss; a man who came from nobody knew where, and who had a quiet way of asking more questions than he answered. Van Dorn broached the subject

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to him one day while discussing the Pullman riots at Chicago in '99.

"Do you believe the company hired those fellows to burn cars, and then laid it at the door of the strikers?" he inquired of Haskett.

Haskett smiled darkly.

"Ask me something hard," he said, enigmatically.

"Well, I see you do believe it," pursued Van Dorn. Things were drifting his way. "Don't you think they were justified in doing so?"

Haskett chuckled. "I don't know that I'd care about being justified, if I had as many millions as they've got," he observed, carelessly.

"Well, but don't you? Don't you see that an owner may sometimes be driven to resort to such means as that, may countenance — or even procure — lawless acts, so that he may avert worse crimes?"

Haskett leaned back in his chair. He had been asked to come to the private office of the owner of the Gloriana, for a special conference.

"Cut it out," he said, laconically. "Come down to cases. I think I know what you want — what are you paying?"

Van Dorn bent forward and laughed excitedly.

"If you burn the whole plant, five thou —"

"Shssh!" hissed Haskett, bringing the front legs

of his chair to the floor with a slam. "You don't want to talk that way," he warned, looking about the office. "If you and I are goin' to trade, you'll have to learn to hold your gab. Why, Lord, man — you don't know who might just happen to be passing one of these windows, and hear enough to send us both to the Pen."

This last was delivered in a resentful whisper. Haskett felt that he was dealing with a disagreeable amateur; and yet the proposition fell in with some old criminal bent in the man's nature, and was not to be resisted.

This, then, had been the arrangement while the great sheds were being built, upon which the extra insurance might be carried. But on the morning of the Fourth, Haskett came to his employer with a pale face and whining voice.

"I've made all the arrangements, Mr. Van Dorn," he said, "for that little business you and I have had up between us; but I'm damned if I can carry 'em out to-night."

"What?" roared Van Dorn. "You go along with me up to the last minute, like this, and then drop from under me — will you? Well, I guess not! You'll do your part in that business — or you'll wish you had. That's all. That's my last word. I tell you it's too late to back out."

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During the planning of the arson, Haskett, the older hand, had taken the lead and held a superior tone with his employer. Now he whined—he fairly crawled.

“Don’t be hard on me, Mr. Van Dorn. Don’t hold it against me, sir. But I tell you I—when I come right up against it—I just can’t.”

“You *just can!*” cut in Van Dorn, viciously. “You’ll find that you can,” thrusting his fair-skinned, clean-shaven jaw forward at the other till he looked strangely brutal and fierce.

“Mr. Van Dorn, sir,” whispered that other, “I tell you I’ve—I’ve—I’ve been in the penitentiary—and ’twas for a job like this. Don’t you push me no further.”

“You have?” snarled Van Dorn, looking the man over with a bloodshot eye.

“Yes, I have,” doggedly. “What did you expect? You wasn’t hunting for a Sunday-school superintendent, was you? Hang it all! what do I get out of it? It’s your mine—your plant—your insurance. What do I get out of it, but the risk of my hide? And I won’t do it. *I won’t do it.* I don’t care if you refuse to give me a dollar for what I’ve already done, or for keeping dark on what I know. Here’s where I quit.”

“You sneaking coward!” Van Dorn fairly

gnashed at him. "We had the thing as safe as a church—the Union was to father it—and you know that the Union is going to break out in a wild razzee on the Fourth. Like enough they'd do it anyhow, if I'd let 'em alone. Come, Haskett, you're not going back on me this way, are you?"

"Let 'em do it, then," said Haskett, doggedly. "Yes; if it's going back on you to refuse to touch them things off, why, yes, I am. They're already in place—you know where—and if you can get somebody else to do the job, why, I'm a safe man to know about it, and I'll look out for him, and stand by you; but touch it further I will not."

And from this resolution Van Dorn found it impossible to move him.

Celia's husband had been going down-hill fast in the last year. His thwarted passion for poor Julia Llewellyn ran in his veins like fire. To quench it, to enable himself to imagine some hope for a successful issue to that affair, he turned more and more to his evillest counsellor, the decanter of cognac which he kept in his office desk, and one sacred to his own use in the sideboard at home.

To ordinary drinking Van Dorn had been accustomed since his youth; but this persistent stoking of fires, already lit, this drinking for the sake of its effect, was a new thing with him. He was never

quite sober in those days, and never really drunk; he was always just pushed past that sane and reasonable point where things are in their proper focus.

Now, as Haskett left the office, he bent, and, with hot, shaking fingers, helped himself to a glass of brandy. Who was there that he could call upon to complete this deed? His mind ran the round of those who had been in his employ, interrogating desperately the fitness of each one.

He was suddenly aware that he was a detested employer, a boss who had won allegiance from no man in his pay. The scurviest of the lot would scorn to run a risk for him — of that he was sure; and many of the men would be glad of his downfall. Aside from Haskett, to whom some instinct had led him, as a man natively criminal and ready to be procured for such an enterprise, there was not one whom he could fix upon as safe to trust in this matter.

There was Ariola's father — he was a tough old bird; and in the days when Ariola was wearing Van Dorn's silks, and sporting the jewelry he gave her, the old man might have been depended upon for a thing of the sort. But since all that was changed, only bitterness was to be expected from that quarter. Old Jeter would gladly be the first to strike him down, to proclaim his guilt or his ruin.

Suddenly a thought dropped with a splash in the pool of his mind. Bob Llewellyn!

Well, why not? He was, perhaps, the only one among Van Dorn's late employés who admired and respected the manager of the Gloriana. There must come a time when Julia herself would give way before the ardour of Tulley's suit. If nothing else would serve, if she protested that she could not stay in Iroquois to face the probability of disgrace for his sake, why, there were the funds he had lodged with the correspondent in Peru.

He began that deposit when he mortgaged the mine, and secured money on the property belonging to the children. He was aware that there must be an anchor to windward, in some country where extradition papers do not follow. And since that time, whenever he had been fretted or annoyed, he had added to the sum. It was there, in case of bankruptcy. It was in such shape that he hoped it could not be traced; and he knew that he could get his hands upon it at any time he chose.

The thought of Julia, Julia bending her proud neck to the yoke of his love, and going with him to this far country, quite overcame him. He saw, in this action of his, a sort of providence; and he breathed freer as he reassured himself that Bob would certainly not refuse him.

CHAPTER XX.

A PROPOSITION TURNED DOWN

THE empty buildings of a factory, or the sheds of a deserted mine, wear often a sinister face to him who enters them alone.

The yard of the Gloriana had been silent and deserted for more than three weeks; the watchman's footsteps were the only ones that waked the echoes in it, when Van Dorn ran up the office steps, put his key in the door and entered, stepping at once to the window and drawing the dingy sash-curtain over its lower portion.

The watchman had just passed sighingly on his rounds, thinking of the many delights of the Fourth which he was missing, when the owner of the Gloriana turned to the man who had come with him, and said:

"We can talk here. I have some very important matters which I wish to speak to you about."

"Yes, sir," said Bob.

For it was Robert Llewellyn. He stood cap in

hand, and most uncomfortable, gazing at the tall, elegantly dressed man in the office chair.

"Sit down, Llewellyn. That's better," as the boy seated himself. "Have a cigar? You don't smoke? Well, that's better yet. But I've got to have something to drink, and you must join me. I keep something special here, something out of the common."

He bent down, unlocked a compartment of his desk, and drew out a decanter and glasses.

"Cognac," he said. "I got it myself in France, so I know it's not the stuff they generally export under that name."

He poured a tiny glass of the fiery liquor, and pushed it toward his young companion, swallowed one himself, and began:

"You're a young fellow, Llewellyn, but I look to you to help me out of a very tight place."

"I shall be glad to do anything I can, Mr. Van Dorn," said Bob. "I think the Union is ready to bring the men back into the Gloriana. I'd be willing to sound Uncle Owen about it for you, if that's what you mean. If I'd known it, I could have mentioned it to him at the picnic to-day. But I'll see him again to-night."

The boy flushed and looked down. Something

about the meeting with his Uncle Owen this night excited and embarrassed him.

"I don't want the men brought back into the mine — not now. I'm going to break Mark Strong before I open the Gloriana again," and Van Dorn smote the table with his fist.

Bob's dark eyes danced; here was a glorious new recruit for the ranks of those who hated the owner of the Twin Brothers.

"You want to see the whole Iroquois district unionized," he said. That last phrase was the present Union slogan.

"No, it's not exactly that. I — hang it all, Llewellyn, how much do you care about the Union? You're not a miner. I'll put you in the office till you are old enough to be a boss, and you can't belong to the Union then, anyhow."

Bob drew back and regarded his employer with some distrust. One saw his mother very plainly in his face just then. The width between his eyes, the directness of gaze, were Julia's own.

"I care a great deal about the Union, Mr. Van Dorn," the boy said, slowly. "I've done some pretty hard things for the Union — and I'd do 'em again," he added, with boyish bravado, which undoubtedly covered a sinking heart, so far as the two

occasions upon which he had employed violence to serve the ends of the Union were concerned.

"Just so," said Van Dorn. "You young fellows are full of devotion to an ideal. But the Union has no business to be your ideal, Llewellyn. You don't belong to that class of people. Look at your mother."

For some reason this grated upon Robert.

"My father was a miner," he said, sturdily. "He had his faults, and they were bad faults, and my mother had to separate from him; but it was not because he belonged to what you call 'that class of people.' My father's people are all miners. I don't feel myself above them."

"But you are above them—you are above them. Mrs. Llewellyn is a wonderful woman—she's a queen. You ought to do something for that mother of yours, Bob. You ought to—to grasp at every opportunity that's offered you, if only for her sake."

The enthusiasm had been kindled, and the chance shot was a fortunate one for Van Dorn. He had reached the boy's weakest spot, his passionate devotion to his beautiful mother.

"I mean to," he said. "Mother's had a hard time; but I'm going to make it up to her."

"Would you like the chance to make it up to her

in a hurry?" asked Van Dorn. "Would you like to be a rich man — to-morrow — or next day?"

"That's a joke," said Bob, laughing. "Who wouldn't? Who doesn't want to wake up rich?"

Van Dorn filled the glass again and pushed it toward the boy. He waited till the other had tasted the liquor, tasted it again, and finally sipped nearly half the contents of the small tumbler.

"Do you know that the strikers are going to burn the whole outside plant of the Gloriana to-night?" he asked, suddenly.

Bob was on his feet in a moment, sobered so far as physical appearance went; but his wits refused to work.

"Who told you?" he gasped, desperately. "What do you know about to-night's work?"

Van Dorn leaned back in his chair and laughed.

"There," he said, "sit down. I'm a good guesser."

"But I begged the Gloriana out," persisted the boy, resting a hand upon the table and leaning forward to peer into Van Dorn's face, with eyes which the unaccustomed liquor rendered dim. "I begged off, for you. I reminded the men that I was the cause of the strike here; and I promised 'em I'd do anything. They've got a scheme to make a big stroke to-night. But I begged off for the Gloriana."

For a moment Van Dorn sat dumbfounded. Then, "You d——d young fool!" he shouted, leaping to his feet. "You've ruined me! The men were coming here — to-night — to burn these buildings — and you interfered? You've ruined me!"

Bob clung, swaying, to the table's edge. His world was crashing and going to smash all about him. He had saved Van Dorn's mine from the torch, at the expense of some very humiliating talk from the leaders of the enterprise; and now Van Dorn had said that he — Robert Llewellyn — had ruined him.

Suddenly Van Dorn gripped the other's wrist.

"You must go back — you must tell them that you've broken with me — you must send them here to burn the place, or — *you must burn it yourself!*"

The boy stiffened. The fumes of the brandy yet muddled his understanding; but about this there could be no mistake; Mr. Van Dorn was giving him an order, sending him to do something — what was it?

"Curse the young fool," muttered Van Dorn. "The brandy was too strong for him. Here," and he urged a glass of water upon Robert.

Bob drew out his handkerchief, sopped it in the fluid, and mopped his forehead.

"You want the Gloriana burned," he said, slowly, "Why?"

"Because I've got it insured for double what it's worth," snapped the baited, exasperated Van Dorn, incautiously. "Because if the brute, fool Union gets to burning things right and left, we'll have martial law, and chuck about half of it into the penitentiary, and then we'll have peace."

He had spoken more to himself than to the tipsy lad before him; yet the effect of the cold water on Bob's face, and the sharp sting of Van Dorn's words, combined to sober him somewhat. He was devoted to the Union, first, last, and always; the Union had ever been an object of veneration in the boy's eyes. This threat of his late employer's was an old one. He believed, as many workingmen do believe, that owners and employers had many times before now procured violence and the destruction of property, that it might be ascribed to the Union, and a strike thereby broken.

"You'll get a crime done, and put it on the Union, to ruin it — to send a lot of my people to penitentiary — and put money in your pocket; and you think *I'll* help you? Well, I'll not do it," he said, obstinately. "I might have burned a building for the Union — that's a proper risk for a man to take; but I'll not do your dirty, criminal work for

you. And if you're over-insured, Mr. Van Dorn, I'll tell the Union of it, and see that your buildings are let alone."

He sat down and eyed his employer sullenly.

"Was that what you wanted to talk to me about?" he asked.

Van Dorn realized to the full his recklessness in trusting with such dangerous matter this raw boy, whom he had not thoroughly sounded. Well, the step must be retraced, or the boy silenced.

"Bob," he said, abruptly, "I'm not going to live in Iroquois any more. I'm going to South America."

"Live where you please. Go where you please. Was that all you wanted of me?" inquired the other, savagely, sitting half-averted.

"I'm going to South America," Van Dorn resumed, smoothly; "and somebody is going with me — somebody that you think a great deal of."

The boy turned like a tormented thing; the liquor was dying out, in that sound young physique of his, and his nerves were on edge.

"Say, you go to South America; the sooner the better; and you take who you please with you — but you let me alone. I'll —" hesitating, and looking about him somewhat doubtfully, and with evident distaste — "I'll leave now."

Van Dorn did not rise, nor make any motion to do so.

Bob lingered. "I won't tell on you," he said, half-sulkily.

He was a generous creature; he could not bear to strike the man who once seemed to be kind to him.

"I know, now, that all the favours you've shown me were to fix up for a job like this — but I won't tell on you," and he moved to walk out of the office.

"Bob," called Van Dorn, softly.

The boy checked impatiently. "Well?" he asked, over his shoulder.

"Come back here, you young idiot," said Van Dorn, smilingly.

He rose now, followed, and laid a constraining arm across the boy's shoulders.

"Your mother is going to South America with me," he said, in a low tone.

"You lie!" screamed the boy, striking at him with wild fury.

Van Dorn was a tall, muscular man; the young fellow was no match for him in strength, or science. Even had Robert been quite himself, and prepared for an encounter, it could have had no different ending.

Van Dorn caught the inexpert blow with a dex-

terous fist. The next instant he struck straight for the neck, and knocked his young antagonist to the floor. There he lay quietly. Van Dorn stirred the limp figure with his foot.

"I hope I've killed him," he muttered through his set teeth with a constrained swell of rage. Then, after another glance, he flung himself out of the office, slamming the door behind him.

And as he set out for home, this problem dogged him; how to make some use of Bob Llewellyn's absence. It had cost dearly — now to make it count. He remembered suddenly a facility he had for imitating handwriting. He was half-way to the confines of the yard when this occurred to him; and he went methodically back, inserted the latch-key, and opened the office door.

The prone figure had not moved. There was no blood upon it — probably the boy was only stunned; but of that Van Dorn was careless. He was, indeed, a most inexpert criminal, as he now went about searching for the books upon which young Llewellyn had written. Tearing a leaf at random from one of them, he sat down in the office-chair and somewhat laboriously constructed a note. He addressed it, with more cunning than might have been expected:

"To whom it may concern: I have changed my mind about Van Dorn and the Gloriana. Let him take his luck with the rest. I'm off for Chicago. Will explain when I return.

"BOB LLEWELLYN."

The sending of the note was made easy by his meeting Haskett half-way up the hill.

"I want you to see that this goes into the hands of whoever is leader in to-night's devilment," he said. "You know who it is — and I am not asking. It's the last thing I'll call on you for, and I'll pay you half as much as I would for doing the trick up there."

He jerked an explanatory thumb toward the buildings of the Gloriana. Haskett accepted the commission with a nod, and a gruff "All right."

When Bob Llewellyn awakened from his sick swoon in the office of the Gloriana, his first recollection was of blind, overpowering rage at his late employer. As he lay there, with the room opening and shutting about him like the clattering sticks of a wooden fan, all Van Dorn's conversation came back upon his now sobered mind with perfect clearness. Strangely enough, with what seemed undue insistence, returned that first statement Van Dorn

had made before he launched upon his nefarious proposition:

He had said that he would break Strong! Bob clung by the table leg and crawled up, sick, trembling, and giddy. He sat in the desk chair and thought. His mind was still a little confused, but it was clearing. Van Dorn had said that he would break Mark Strong.

The boy felt that he was weak against this powerful adversary, who had assailed even the sacred purity of his mother. But — Mark Strong — there was strength. If he could enlist Strong; if he could ally himself with Strong, Julia might be avenged.

In the light of Van Dorn's behaviour, poor Robert reviewed Strong's attitude toward the woman who had once been his promised wife. Had it ever been less than that of a loving and respectful friend? It came to the boy as an illuminating idea that his Uncle Owen's notions were crude and coarse; that Mark Strong had shown more respect for the woman he had once loved, by avoiding her society while the man who was her legal husband still lived. And then, when death had removed the barrier from between them, if he didn't choose to come forward to order as a suitor, why, after all, was that an insult? Was that an affront? After

Van Dorn's assertions, it seemed to Julia Llewellyn's poor, loving, loyal son, that it was not at all.

The boy was Julia's own. With both, thought was action. He was at the door, trying it, almost before he had formulated these conclusions. He found it locked, and was debating whether or no he should shout for help, when a step sounded upon the porch outside, and he heard Mrs. Van Dorn's voice call her husband's name.

Celia had at first disregarded the stories which did not fail to reach her, concerning her husband's building mania; but after a time she felt obliged to take cognizance of them. The mine had been her father's; it was to belong to her children; and she could not turn her back and see it brought to ruin.

"What's your idea in doing so much building just now?" she asked of her husband, guardedly.

"It's a convenient time to build. I have to re-timber, anyhow; that keeps the men out of the way; and lumber's cheap," he replied, civilly. "I want to put the mine in thorough repair, finer condition than it ever has been in, before I bring my new set of workmen here. I feel that I must offer special inducements to get the class of men I want."

This seemed reasonable enough; and yet, somehow, it did not quiet Celia's fears. She had taken the children down to Iroquois to see the Fourth of

July parade. There were to be some people at the house for a late supper, but for several hours yet her time was her own. She sent Donald and Dorothy in, and turned her horse's head toward the Gloriana.

In the yard the watchman met her. "Was you lookin' for Mr. Van Dorn?" he said. "He won't be back for about an hour."

Celia did not tell the man that she thought her husband was in Iroquois for the day. She merely nodded, and went on with her inspection of the new buildings.

One thing the man's unconscious warning did, was to make her ask him if he would not lead her horse around to the sheds. There it would be out of sight; and if Van Dorn came in, she need not meet him; there need be no distressing explanations.

The man was gone, and Mrs. Van Dorn had soon forgotten him in painful wonder over her husband's proceedings. She knew the equipment of a good modern mine, as well as any practical man; and this jumble of jerry-built sheds dismayed her. She was aware that her husband was impractical and unversed in the business he had chosen to assume; yet what she saw here passed her wildest ideas of mismanagement; it almost suggested insanity.

She had just come from the hall of the big board-

ing-house, and was about to seek the watchman and ask for the horse and buggy, when Van Dorn and Bob Llewellyn crossed the empty yard. Celia drew back in the doorway with burning cheeks, and let them pass, noting, almost against her will, that her husband was even more carefully dressed than usual, and that the boy's admiring eyes followed him eagerly. Was she acting the part of a woman and a mother when she did not interfere? Then came the watchman's voice calling from the back of the house:

"Mrs. Van Dorn, there seems to be something the matter with the buggy. Shall I go down to the shop and see if I can get a blacksmith to come up and fix it? The Lord knows whether I can get anybody, on the Fourth this way."

Celia was a clever, practical little soul, and she lost sight of all her perplexities for the moment, putting the buggy to rights. It was not broken, but the king-bolt had jarred loose, and left the shafts dangling about the old horse's heels. It took nearly half an hour to find a suitable nut on another vehicle, and get the matter finally adjusted.

At the end of that time Mrs. Van Dorn was driving out of the yard when the sight of the office recalled her husband and young Llewellyn to her mind. She drew up in front of the little frame

building, but there was no sound, and the doors and windows were closed. She was going on, when she heard a faint movement within. Absolutely without fear, she jumped from the buggy and ran up the steps, tried the door, and found it locked.

"Is that you, Tulley?" she cried, rattling the knob.

No answer.

"Tulley — Tulley!" she called, again and again. "It is I, Celia."

She fancied there had been a movement in response to her first call; but now all was quiet. She told herself it would be absurd to believe that any human being was in the office on this sweltering July afternoon, with the windows closed; yet in truth Celia Van Dorn could not shake off that belief. She went to a casement and began to pry gently with the tip of her parasol, when —

"It's — it's me, Mrs. Van Dorn," came a hesitating, boyish voice from within, and the sash-curtain was drawn aside, showing Bob Llewellyn's face.

Celia dropped her parasol with a clatter.

"Do you want to stay in there?" she asked. Then, with her usual directness, "I saw you go in with Mr. Van Dorn — is he there? — is anything the matter?" with mounting anxiety.

For a moment the two glared at each other doubtfully. Celia had visions of Van Dorn done to death, lying on the floor of his own office. She reflected that Bob Llewellyn was prominent among the strikers, the nephew of the district president.

What the boy had to keep from her was best known to himself; yet the sight of her terrified eyes brought a sudden resolution to him.

"Mr. Van Dorn isn't here," he said. "You needn't be uneasy about him. You'll find him at home all right when you get there. He — I went to sleep, and I guess he forgot that the night-latch was on the door."

It was a lame explanation, but it must serve to bridge the time till a better could be offered. The boy had pushed up the sash as he spoke, and Celia smelled the fumes of brandy, the overturned decanter adding its portion. She remembered that poor Bob's father had been a drunkard. She could not forget Van Dorn's unseemly pursuit of the mother — oh, it was all unspeakably vile.

"You had better close the window down after you come out," she said, gently. "And you can just get away before the watchman comes around."

This brought a sickly smile to Bob's lips. The watchman was one of the men whom Van Dorn had

mentioned, who would be expecting Bob's assistance in that night's work.

"Yes'm," he said, awkwardly, as he climbed through the window. "You're very good not to make any fuss about it; but it'll be all right. I'll try to thank you some other time."

He pulled up, with a sudden remembrance that his one errand this night was to murder this woman's husband. He was only a boy, after all, and the reckless Llewellyn blood could carry him just so far. Now, a lump rose in his throat, and he watched the shabby little buggy and its pale, small mistress drive away, through unshed tears.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DESCENT OF THE GODDESS

FOR more than a year there had been peace and prosperity at the Twin Brothers. Strong was despot in his little realm; and the negroes, used to being so ruled, took kindly to his firm, salutary way. The white miners who had stayed with him were quiet men, not likely to make him trouble; so there was harmony within the sentried dead-line, though it had taken a menace of war to secure it, and — if the bull may be pardoned — might take the actual thing to maintain it. Strong never really came to like this alien people he had brought in. But they had their good points; they were a kindly, mellow-natured set of semi-barbarians; they took pride in the military duties which he never intermitted, and made a squad of whose drill the Captain was justly proud. They were natural musicians, and the band played with pleasing frequency in the bandstand on the parade-ground, sending dulcet strains

out over the dead-line to tell that all went well within it.

Meantime, the Twin Brothers had made the best year in its history. Mark Strong continued to take out coal in peaceful obliviousness of any difficulties. Owen Llewellyn, as district president, was aghast. If such an object-lesson were permitted to remain before the eyes of his district and the mine owners of the United States, he felt that the power of his organization was no longer existent.

So the watchword was "Break Strong. Strong's got to be broken, or the Union goes. It's life or death with us now — Strong, or the Union. *Strong must be broken!*"

Is it strange that, with such an issue confronting them, such disaster threatening, the wilder element continually hearkened to the suggestion that there were other ways — ways far more direct and expeditious — of silencing the little man in gray, than that of ruining him financially? Such things are easily denied, after the act; and it is indeed probable that no American organization ever had a committee on secret murder. Yet the facts are apt to run about alike. In this case Strong was successfully opposing the Union; and Strong's life was attempted four times — four times, that is, that

were duly and publicly known — on his trips between his own place and Iroquois.

For this reason Captain McClintock remained with him, and Demas was still apt to be the only servant in the big Queen Anne house where the two men were marooned, though it was more than once suggested to Strong that the Southern negroes were often excellent cooks.

But he negatived the implied proposition always with sharp distaste. He had cut himself off from his kind, and was living on a little continent of his own making, whose boundaries were the dead-line. Up at the boarding-house they had a fat darky woman in the kitchen, with her husband doing chores, waiting on table, and making beds; but Strong was too averse to these humble companions of his exile to think of making use of them in a domestic capacity.

“No, no,” he said; “we’ll manage somehow till I can get a Swedish girl from Chicago to stay. Perhaps I’d better try a man and his wife — they might be less likely to be scared.”

A natural result of this determination to break the manager of the Twin Brothers was unrest and petty strikes in the mines which were fully unionized. The men were captious, exacting, hard to handle; and when it came to actual trouble, there

was not wanting some one to go privately to the representative of the owners and say that the Union would be pacified, on many counts, if they (the owners) would remonstrate with Mark Strong against degrading the American working man by bringing in niggers to take away his job.

“Why, there’s no place for this thing to stop,” Llewellyn said, in trying to win over the manager of the Tuscola. “Get him to give up his niggers, and unionize the Twin Brothers; if we can’t get him to unionize the mine — if we don’t have no hold on him — he’d go bribe the United States Senate and Congress, and get leave to bring in Chinese. He’s the feller that would try to get trained baboons to get out coal for him, before he’d fail. He needs the Union to keep him in check.”

When this speech came to the Captain’s ears, he grinned exceedingly, and said that the Twin Brothers had tried baboons first, but they found men got out more coal.

Strong made no reply; his answer was the carloads of coal he got out, the orders he booked which would, in the nature of things, have gone to other mines in the district — mines which had been strictly Union, and which were now being harassed with labour difficulties — all for the sake of

breaking him. The situation was indeed a complex one.

Van Dorn's infatuation for Julia Llewellyn grew, apparently, by the food that was denied it; and here Strong was as much in his way as he was in the way of the Union. It was for Mark Strong's sake that she clung to respectability — so Van Dorn told himself. Mark Strong had that to offer her, which he could not give — a name and home, the respect of her circle.

Well, he would outwit him in some way. He would out-stay him, he would out-face him, out-play him. And here he made his final capitulation to the worst that was in him, and remembered gladly that the Union might be his best ally in getting rid of a rival.

The strikes at the other mines had been mere peevish outbreaks; all the rougher element gathered in Iroquois, or as near the Twin Brothers' deadline as seemed safe. One thing on which the Union had not counted, was the rage of the owners who had unionized their mines, made every concession, only to see Strong defy the organization, stand like a rock for the human right to manage his own business in his own way, teach this trade organization metes and bounds to its authority, and — make money by it where they lost!

Early in June there was a consultation of the representatives of seven other mines in the district. Van Dorn was hot to have the State troops brought in; he was an old friend of the governor's, and he believed he could get the militia sent to overawe the strikers before any great violence or destruction of property had been attempted. A fund was subscribed for this purpose, and the matter put in his hands. He had his own reasons — reasons which he could not make public — for intending that there should be destruction of property about the Gloriana; and he entered at once into negotiations, with a view to having the troops ready when they should be needed. He made a visit to Springfield, and convinced the governor of the likelihood of this necessity arising; and Colonel Harbury, commander-in-chief of the State troops, came, unofficially, to look over the ground.

About the time the owners got together and decided that something must be done, the active heads of all the Locals in the district took the same action. There was one answer to all their troubles; in this they were more fortunate than their late employers; for, while the latter knew not which way to turn, whether to attempt conciliation or force, the Union was agreed as one man that, Mark Strong once removed, all would go well in the Iro-

quois district. The man who could resist a full-grown strike and resist it successfully — definitely — permanently, must go. The means to be used figured in the plans as kidnapping; but the men in charge were endowed with discretion in the matter as wide as all the universe; they were to resort to anything that might prove necessary; and with a man of Strong's type the ultimate was certain.

There was something insulting about the new washer which had been put in at the Twin Brothers. A washer is a washer, and a necessary apparatus for the cleaning of coal; its installation may mean no more than prosperity, since the thing costs from ten to fifteen thousand dollars, and the Twin Brothers had an old washer by no means superannuated. But the Locals of the Mine Workers' Union in and about Iroquois chose to feel that Mark Strong had aimed this washer at them, as it were, a taunt, a gibe.

Well, they would burn his fine washer for him; and when the blaze drew him toward it — he might suffer the fate of other moths.

Bob Llewellyn was urged by his uncle as a suitable person to take part in this plot.

"He owes Strong one that he's never had a chance yet to pay. He's young, but he's safe," said

the district president. "You give him something to do — I'll answer for him."

"Bob's all right — it's his mother that needs some one to answer for her," returned the man upon whose shoulders the burden of responsibility lay.

"Women are like that," agreed Llewellyn, a little uneasily; "afraid their men-folks will get into difficulties. And you must mind that this is Jule's only son, and she a widow that has seen more trouble than most. Bob will manage her; he'll keep her out of the way this time, without her suspicioning anything."

It is impossible to determine — afterward and by means of a coroner's jury — just how much, how far, a society or organization has approved the murder committed by its members in the course of a strike. Strong held — and many sensible labour leaders hold with him — that the organization which countenances and dictates a strike sanctions the murders which may be committed for the cause. They believed, and perhaps the American people will come to believe, that a society cannot plan a strike or boycott without (subjectively, at least) contemplating the violence, the arson, the destruction of property and human life which labouring men know better than any others may result from this strike.

So perhaps it is not necessary to represent Mark Strong's murder as having been determined upon in open meeting of the Local Branch of the Mine Workers' Union which still existed in the vicinity of the Twin Brothers, and held fitful meetings in the room over Yount's saloon. Indeed, it is true that such was never the case; but matters were determined upon at these meetings which resulted in the planning by Bert Patterson and ten others of the arson and murder to take place on the night of July fourth.

"You will have to look after that mother of yours," growled Dempsey, as they concluded the last of their arrangements. "She queered us, all right, all right, when we pretty nearly got the little devil, that night he was going to Chicago."

"You let my mother alone!" flashed Bob. "She has a right to say what she pleases, and go where she pleases."

The big Irishman squared himself before the boy, hands truculently on hips, and small eyes snapping.

"Now, Bob Llewellyn," he began, and it was plain all the others were with him, "we don't want any loose-head from you about your mother giving us away that time. We think it's more than you've got any right to expect, for us to trust you in any particular plans after that. How do we know but

you gave it away to her yourself? But I don't say we think so," as the boy's eyes began to blaze and his hands to double themselves into fists. "I don't say we put that on you — but we might. You just account for your mother on the night of July fourth — or this here business is off — that's all."

So it came about that Julia Llewellyn found herself urged to take the part of the Goddess of Liberty in the tableaux which were given in Union Hall on the night of the Fourth.

"But, I'm too old," she said, laughing, to Cassiday, when he urged the matter upon her. "Let some of the girls do that."

"There ain't a one of them that could look the part like yourself," asserted Cassiday — and he spoke the truth.

"We want you on account of your hair," urged Kate Carmody, who was still Jule's ardent admirer, and now an innocent ally of the strikers who wished to get Strong's old sweetheart out of the way for that evening's work.

It was true that Jule's abundant hair fell nearly to her knees in waving masses; and when this splendid golden-bronze mane was let down, and crowned with a small red liberty cap, with its single gilt paper star upon the front, she shone forth the beauty she really was. Her gown was made by her

own clever fingers, as were most of those worn in the tableau with her. A tricolour scarf crossed her nobly molded bust, passing over her shoulder from left to right, and was knotted upon her right hip. She was to hold a shield against the right side of her skirt, and to stand upon the top of a rather insecure pedestal, with the thirteen original States — impersonated by thirteen girls — grouped about its base. This certainly seemed a plan for keeping her out of mischief.

That Jule was a subjective creature is true; she was one who had premonitions, whose dreams foreshadowed things; and yet the positive terror with which she passed that night was something heretofore unknown in her life. She did not deceive herself; she admitted promptly and fully that she was afraid some plot was afoot against Mark Strong's life, and that her son Robert Llewellyn was concerned in it. To have given the root of this fear would have been beyond her.

With a woman's wisdom — the subtlety of the slave, rather than the direct methods of the free-born — she insisted that Bob should take a part in the tableau; he was already a member of the band which was to discourse music for the occasion.

Her objective suspicions were lulled by his ready acquiescence in this plan, and by the interest he took

in the costume she was making for him; but something at the back of her head was alert, looking out for disaster, from the time she donned her classic white robe in the improvised dressing-room, among the crowd of laughing girls.

She was mounted on her swaying pedestal before she knew the worst, with two or three girls in front of her. The green curtains were being parted, before she had decided what to do.

Two young men, representing respectively the Army and Navy, were to have acted as supporters to the group which Jule's figure crowned; and of these, Bob, in sailor costume, was to stand upon her left. Something unfamiliar in the blue serge shoulders of this figure, in the poise of the head which the nautical cap covered, sent a little shiver of apprehension through her even while she climbed up to her place.

As the curtains were thrown back and the tableau fire set burning, the girl near this sailor lad uttered a smothered exclamation of dismay. Something was slipping in the garland she held. She appealed in an undertone to him, and the boy turned his head. It was not Bob!

For a moment Julia was stone-cold. Then she blazed and glowed with righteous wrath. She saw the whole vile trick, and from it apprehended the

worst. The audience before her clapped and applauded. But for Julia Llewellyn, the confines of the hall melted away. She was walking again with Mark Strong through the wintry dusk; she heard the shouts of those who had ambushed him; she saw his face of anguish at what he deemed her cruel treachery. Every blighting detail of that dreadful mistake was seared into her memory. That should not happen to her again. She had borne poverty, disappointment, bereavement; when the time came she would bear to be wrongly condemned — by some one other than her old lover. For more than a year she had known the bitterness of being utterly misunderstood by Mark Strong, cast out from him; and she felt that not only could she never run the risk of adding to the tragic misunderstanding, but she must make this night atone for and explain that other one, if the thing were possible.

Blindly, unconsideringly, she bent and laid her hand upon the shoulder of the figure in front of her, and leaped to the platform with the clean spring of a young girl.

“What’s the matter — are you sick?” cried Kate Carmody. It was she Julia had utilized in getting down.

“Let me help you, Mrs. Llewellyn,” put in the

young man who had impersonated the sailor, with suspicious alacrity.

"You help yourself out of this black business the best you can," Julia answered, turning on him a look before which he shrank. "I am going to do what I can for the one you know of—and for my wretched boy. Oh!" she groaned, "God send that I'm not too late."

The audience had risen almost *en masse*, and was shouting inquiries toward the stage.

"Pull them curtains!" shouted Bill Dempsey, who was managing the affair.

The band struck up "America," the music which was to have accompanied this tableau, and Dempsey turned to deal with his rebellious goddess.

"Now, Mrs. Llewellyn, if there is anything you want to know, I am at your service," he added, turning to where Jule had stood.

But he spoke to her departing back. In her white dress, just as she was, with her hair flying over her shoulders, she sprang across the footlights, since she found the way to the dressing-room purposely barred. Through the audience she elbowed her way, asking no questions, and answering none. There was not a face among them that she felt she could trust.

"Let her go," said Dempsey, comfortably.

"We've kept her long enough. The trick will be turned before she could get over there — anyway, she doesn't know the direction to go in." And in a louder tone he added, bowing to the disturbed audience, "Mrs. Llewellyn was sick — The Goddess of Liberty don't like being penned up, I guess," and he announced the next number on the programme.

Julia found the street deserted; the attractions above-stairs had cleared it. There would be somebody in Yount's place; but to them she dared not apply. After all, what could she do! She had been a fool — a fool — a fool, to trust Bob's protestations. She should have gone a thousand miles from this town after that terrible night in the field near Mark's place.

But these despairing reflections interfered not at all with Jule's bodily activity. She caught up her trailing white skirts and kilted them with a hat-pin. A horse — she must have a horse! She must reach Strong's house in time to warn him, or to share whatever threatened him.

"I won't — I won't! I won't live on. If Bob's into it, and they kill Mark, they'll have to just kill me too. He needn't ask anything else — Bob — he needn't expect —" she whispered sobbingly to herself, as she ran around to the side of the building

where there was a dilapidated old hitching-rack, and a shed beneath which turnouts used to be tied. Would there be anything there now? Yes, there was one horse. Some careful soul, whose family was in the room above, had unharnessed his nag, or rather taken him from the vehicle, leaving the harness upon him. The animal stood munching hay at the rack. Julia drew him back, and slipped the bit into his mouth with tremulous fingers. Then she sought to connect the creature with the vehicle standing in the shed.

The sound of running feet in the street beyond broke in upon her. In sheer terror of detection, she struggled to the horse's back, turned him, and sent him at an awkward, plunging gallop in the direction of Strong's home. Crouching close, clutching the harness with both hands, she urged the stiff old creature to its utmost speed.

"Pray God that I may not be too late," she repeated under her breath. And then again: "This time I will stay and share it. They'll just have to kill me, too. O Mark — Mark!"

Nothing but desperation could have kept her seated upon the clumsy animal. She clung to the harness, and guided him as best she might with the lines which were knotted to the harness saddle. She took the road for the Twin Brothers, which was

evidently the old horse's way home as well, for he applied himself to it with gusto.

When it came to turning off below the sycamore-tree, however, it was a different matter. He struggled, with that patient mulishness characteristic of the family horse.

"I have endured much," he seemed to say. "Your method of mounting was quite irregular; and I object to the way you ride. I have borne with these things; but when you would turn off, and try to take me away from my oats-bin at this time of night, I rebel."

Looking eastward away from lighted Iroquois, and toward the big Queen Anne house, as she fought the beast, Julia's attention was caught and held for a moment by the aspect of the sky. The night had been relentlessly hot and very dark. Now it presented a curious appearance. To the northeast there was a great, rising, expanding continent of black cloud, whose edges were smooth, straight, cliff-like; while the southeast was of a clear, pale blue-gray, full of subdued night-light. The moon, far past the full, and about half an hour high, hung over Mark's house, close at the edge of, and beneath, the black cloud-mass, which was sweeping along under the propulsion of a northeast wind, to cover her wild, tragic, turgidly reddened face.

Wrath, menace, furious resentment, were writ large upon the face of the heavens. Looking up the slope, she could see above her the black, huge umbels of the oaks move heavily; the long, slim plume of a Lombardy poplar whip and bow; the graceful spreading arms of an elm, tossing and wringing and writhing in the gusts of the rising wind, whose cool fingers caught nervously at her loosened hair. While she looked, the wild-faced moon was swallowed up of the black cloud-mass, and the night became densely dark.

From this time on, her mount engrossed a great part of her attention; reluctant, unconvinced, he shrugged along, trying to bolt down side-paths which she could not see, and edge back toward his own home road. She was straining her eyes through the blackness to make out the sycamore, when a hand on the bit brought the horse almost to his haunches.

"Hold on," growled a curiously muffled, feigned man's voice; and she thought she saw something shine faintly, like a gun-barrel.

"Bob!" she screamed, with a sudden terrified intuition. "Oh, son — for God's sake!"

The man who held her horse's head dropped the bridle, and fell back, ejaculating:

"Lord! It's a woman!"

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"Stop her!" roared Owen Llewellyn's unmistakable voice from the roadside above.

"It's just a woman," hesitated her captor, with a half-hearted effort to regain the line he had relinquished.

Now, if she had been at one with her steed, she could have made good her escape; but the old horse balked and whirled, nearly unseating his rider, Owen Llewellyn's deep-throated "Whoa!" appearing to him much better authority than her frantic efforts to make him go on.

"Owen!" she cried, "Owen — let me pass! Where's Bob? Where's my boy? What — *get back!* — what are you leading him into this night? If harm comes to Mark Strong through you, I'll tell — I'll — oh, so help me God, I will —"

She had tugged vainly at the line. Now it came free in her hand — the buckle was unfastened at the bit! Whirling up the bunch of loose leather, she brought it down upon her horse's head with all the strength of her vigorous arm. He plunged, reared, and tore forward, narrowly missing the man who had tried to hold him.

"Jule!" yelled Llewellyn, as he stumbled after the horse. "Jule! There ain't no harm to come to anybody — stop! you fool! Hold on, *Julia!*"

These outcries were in as guarded a tone as

Llewellyn deemed he could make heard. He listened to the loose stones rattling under the horse's clattering hoofs, to the heavy breathing of the animal, as its rider urged it up the slope. Then he heard the sentry above challenge: "Who goes there?"

It was here and now, not elsewhere nor at another time, that Owen Llewellyn made the turning. For years he had pursued Mark Strong relentlessly, the excuse he gave his own soul being a grudge on behalf of his beautiful, slighted sister-in-law. The ill-feeling had grown to a sort of vendetta, and all for Julia's sake. Now, in a moment, this thing with which the Welshman had bedraped and concealed his own violence and insubordinate rage against those who would rule him, dropped away. The war was not for Julia — d——n her; there she rode to warn the very one upon whom he had sworn vengeance for her sake. All that was best in the man veiled its face and turned aside as he raised his gun and sent a shot after her. Then he came back, cursing, to his companion by the road's edge.

"Get out of here — get yourself out of here!" he ground forth. "There'll be no chance to do anything at the Twin Brothers this night."

"Whose fault is it?" flared the other, who was a miner from the Culleoka. "I reckon that was

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your sister-in-law. If you can't boss your own family, you ain't fit to boss anything in the Union — I can tell you that. Don't you curse me; I didn't do nothing but let her get away — you shot after her. A nice batch you are, all round!"

Llewellyn took himself in hand, and curbed his fury as best he might.

"Let's get down to the river," he said, shortly. "We may do some good there, if the boat hasn't gone."

"How about Dempsey, and the ten who were to meet us at the Twin Brothers?" hesitated the Culleoka man.

But at the mention of Mark Strong's mine, Llewellyn turned loose such a stream of profanity as drowned out his companion's objections.

"They can take care of themselves," he finished, savagely. "If they get anything done — why, it's so much. She'll warn the whole nest of niggers; and more than like, Dempsey won't get to put a foot inside the fence."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE GODDESS INTERVENES

THE table was perfectly appointed, and perfectly served, as the Van Dorn table always was. About it the low-toned hum of conversation sounded pleasantly. The one topic seemed to be the strike.

Van Dorn's wife, beside his floridity, and his sister's healthy bloom, looked strangely gray and pinched to-night. Mark's eyes travelled again and again to the little lady sitting silent and irresponsible at her own table's foot. To an observing eye there was something ominous in her calm, something that promised more words than would be welcome when once she took occasion to speak.

Miss Van Dorn had let Strong take her in, but the places were so arranged that Colonel Harbury, commander-in-chief of the State troops, sat on her left, and to him she devoted most of her attention, apparently with the idea of piquing the owner of the Twin Brothers.

"I can't be entirely sorry that we had a strike,"

she said smilingly, to the military gentleman, "if it calls you folks into the neighbourhood. Things are deadly dull around Iroquois; and to my mind the very sight of tents suggests romantic possibilities."

"And I, on my part, must feel kindly toward anything which brought me within Miss Van Dorn's sphere," replied the colonel, gallantly.

Strong was not listening; he sat idly turning an empty wine-glass; he was an abstemious man, and a formal meal of this sort bored him exceedingly. He looked neither better nor worse in his evening dress. He would never have been the man to be mistaken for a waiter in that garb; but only, he chucklingly declared, because he did not appear sufficiently elegant and imposing.

Presently the conversation veered more strongly to the strike.

"I was reading an article the other day, by some man who's studied these things," said Colonel Harbury, "and he says the Open Shop — I understand that's what Mr. Strong fought for — means the destruction of all Trade Unions."

The owner of the Twin Brothers smiled a little.

"It is odd," he said, "how all amateurs, if I may call them so, in handling this industrial problem confound the strike and the Union. If the Union clings to the strike, if they become but organiza-

tions for the purpose of enforcing their views by striking, why, yes, they'll go, along with the strike — for that's surely going."

Harbury regarded this summing up of the matter unfavourably. There was not enough fight in it to please a man of war.

"But this writer holds," he went on, "that if the Union succeeds, nothing can prevent final industrial domination. He thinks the country will be ruled by its Trade Unions."

"He supposes that they'll put the foundation-stone in the cornice, does he?" asked Strong's quietest voice.

"But they *could* rule — they've got a majority — and this is a popular government," interposed Van Dorn, voicing the fear of many another like him.

"Is it the Populist party that you're afraid of?" queried Strong. "When our Trade Unions attempt to rule by strikes, they remain Unions; when they attempt to rule by the ballot, their sole representative so far is the Populist party — not a very formidable one, you'll admit. The vote sifts the thing; the men, individually, go where they belong, and lose significance as Trade Unionists."

"I don't see how you can say that the Unions are about to give up striking," demurred Miss Van

Dorn. "We've never had such a time with them; and Tulley says that it's not miners alone; they're striking in all the trades all over the country."

"I draw my conclusion from that fact," said Strong. "A thing of the sort always looms biggest just before it collapses. There is a direct connection between the wide-spread striking and the passing of strikes. It seems that the American people are to have an ample opportunity to see and feel the workings of such methods, to decide — with plenty of evidence before them — whether or not they want strikes. Remember the strikers, themselves, are part of the people. If striking is only common enough, and persistent enough, they're certain to disapprove of it in some other trade, and come to see the folly of it in their own."

"They tell me that the women and children in the Iroquois district are beginning to suffer," said Miss Van Dorn, in the tone of one mentioning the hardships of cattle upon the Western ranges, or wild beasts in the jungle.

Van Dorn was talking loud and laughing much; his tight-skinned, long oval cheeks were deeply flushed; the danger, the tremendous excitement of the moment, stimulated him even more than the liquor he continued to drink in liberal portions.

"I'm always glad to hear that," he remarked.

"It means the breaking of the strike. The women — hang 'em! — are at the root of this, as of most other matters; and when they begin to squeal, the men have got to move."

"*Cherchez la femme*," quoted the colonel laboriously, adding, "But, after all, isn't it a question of force? The modern industrial world is a battleground, and occasionally you have to have real soldiers to fight upon it."

Miss Van Dorn looked at the speaker with admiration, and struck her palms softly together. She was rather overdoing the part — but then, Jane Van Dorn had always enjoyed the disadvantage of possessing no sensibilities to disturb her own peace, or to warn her in a situation such as this.

"I tell Tulley," she declared, "it's a jolly good thing for the miners that they have him to deal with, and not me. If I owned the mines, I should find a way to work them — even if I had to do as Mr. Strong does."

She seemed to forget that the mines belonged in fact to her brother's wife, and not to her brother. Tulley himself had so long forgotten it, that nothing seemed likely to recall it to his remembrance.

"There's one thing sure," Van Dorn was saying; "if we'd put in the schools, and the lecture-rooms, and the chances for special training which you folks

suggest" (he spoke to his wife, or at her, in that irritating indirect fashion some husbands use), "as soon as the remedy took good hold, we wouldn't have a man left in the mines."

"My husband," observed Mrs. Van Dorn, replying to the speech, but addressing Strong, "always holds that the business cannot be elevated. He thinks that if we raise the miner or his children, we take them away from their work."

She spoke with a curious, detached air, and quite as if the matter were no concern of hers. Strong recalled her, a sturdy little girl of twelve, riding her pony over these hills; her father's daughter, to be sure, and the little lady patroness of her father's employés, but a friendly small soul, knowing the affairs of the girls and the boys of her own age, who were daughters and sons of the men working in her father's mines. Celia Van Dorn he well knew was not likely to follow her husband far in his old-world ideas of caste.

"That's exactly what I think," agreed Van Dorn, with something of a flourish. "No man who could possibly do anything else would be a miner. The owners — employers — like to tell themselves a lot of nice-sounding lies; but it's my way to say the thing just as it is, without any fancy frills; and I admit frankly that mining's a business to which a

man must be held down, if you want to keep him to it — nothing but ignorance and vice will reconcile him to his calling.”

Mrs. Van Dorn contemplated the rings upon her thin little hands.

“It would be a curious public policy,” she said, “which advocated the production of a degraded class, so that they might follow a degrading calling, and thereby make money for their employer, and supply the world with a necessary commodity.”

Van Dorn shook his head in protest.

“Pray do not speak as though I had ordered so many dozens of the beggars from Providence, and was being supplied with ’em, Celia. I’m not, you know. I find them here, and I make use of them. When you elevate the miner you have no miners left. And as I have a mighty pressing need of a few hundred to operate my — operate the Gloriana — why, I’ll certainly not make any attempt to elevate ’em above my work.”

The host seemed to have a sudden, uneasy consciousness that Strong had been a miner; the friends of the little man in gray were apt to have spasmodic recollections of the sort which proved embarrassing.

“Probably you and Strong can agree,” he added to his wife, awkwardly. “Your theories may not seem to him as visionary as they do to me.”

The owner of the Twin Brothers raised quiet eyes to Van Dorn's flushed countenance, and the small, pale face of the lady opposite him. His calm, low-pitched voice — the voice that was always listened for — said, gently, not sarcastically or reproachfully:

"It may be from my early training in the mines, but it has always seemed to me, in all questions, that the way up was the way out."

Before Mrs. Van Dorn could agree or disagree, her husband chimed in, sharply:

"The way out — that's what I said. You go far enough up, and you'll be out — you'll have no miner left to dig your coal. Strong himself is an example of it. Being the man he is, he has not been a practical miner for some twenty years — though he tries to make us believe he began as one."

Strong smiled a little grimly over this evident effort to smooth the asperities of his early history.

"Striking and its attendant evils," he said, "are the work of devils — and your mine owner should be careful that while he is assisting long days of bitter toil, away from refining and elevating influence, to brutalize his employés, he is not making devils of them. If he does that, and then if they break loose, what can he expect — what —"

The quiet voice to which every one at the table

was listening intently, with extremely various expressions of countenance, hesitated, and broke off. For there sounded a clattering as though shod hoofs came across the terrace outside; some one jumped from the horse; there was the rending plunge of a body breaking through the vines about the porch; a heavy hand fell upon the fastening of the window screen, the French window burst violently open, and a pale-faced woman in strange clinging robes of white looked into the room. Her gaze went around the company till it encountered Mark Strong; then she put her hand to her throat and whispered:

“Thank God!”

With one uncontrollable impulse they had all sprung to their feet, and drawn somewhat toward each other as they turned to face the window. For an instant they stood so, and gazed at the amazing figure which had burst in upon them. A white, pseudo-classic robe, splashed with mud about its hem, left bare her nobly molded arms, her chest, and the column of her neck. The richly curling hair, which tossed wildly about her pale face and hung to her knees, was surmounted by a little red liberty cap, with a single gilt star upon its front. Athwart her splendid body from shoulder to hip was knotted a tricolour, and a flag had evidently been draped behind her, for some shreds of it still drooped at her

shoulders. Those about the table stared with pale faces; the woman who had entered through the window looked back at them with a face as pale.

"Jule!" breathed Strong, and despite himself his eyes fastened upon her eyes.

"Mrs. Llewellyn!" cried Miss Van Dorn, in a curious voice.

"I — I — I —" and Julia staggered forward toward the table; hardly would her trembling, cramped limbs hold her up.

Instantly — with the open solicitude of a lover — Van Dorn was beside her, a wine-glass in his hand.

"Sit down," he said, in a low, impassioned tone, turning his back upon the others. "Here, take some wine. You look faint."

Truly she shook from head to foot, with painful emotion, excitement, and the exhaustion of such a ride, clinging, cramped and insecure, to such a steed. Now she put out a trembling hand and took the glass unconsciously, spilling its contents down her white robe, where it dripped like blood.

"I'm out of breath," she managed to utter, finally. "I came past Mr. Strong's place to" — she hesitated, then essayed again — "to warn him that the strikers" — she gazed piteously about her — "that the strikers —"

Her eyes fell. There was silence in the room.

Colonel Harbury had been looking at the new-comer with peculiar insolence, since her first entry.

"You are Bob Llewellyn's mother, aren't you?" he inquired, with military brevity.

Everybody else in the room knew, and nobody heeded the colonel's question. Mrs. Van Dorn's haggard eyes had never left Julia's face; now she came close and caught the widow's arm.

"If you want to warn Mr. Strong, speak out, Julia Copeland," she said, using the name by which she had known the girl before her marriage. "Speak out, quick, while there's time. He will believe you. We — I believe you. What is it the strikers mean to do?"

This first touch of kindness quite overpowered poor Julia. Sinking into the chair which Van Dorn had all the time been proffering, she gasped out:

"They're going to burn the washer at the Twin Brothers; and when Mark — when Mr. Strong comes toward the fire, he's to be ambushed. I knew that much when I started. On the way I found out that the head-tower of every mine in the Iroquois district is to be burned — and God help the owners if they go near the fire!"

There was dead silence in the room. The butler, who had ceased his serving operations, stood near the door through which he brought the dishes, and

behind his shoulders appeared the scared faces of two maids.

Suddenly, across the silence cut Jane Van Dorn's cool tones.

"I believe you are the person who warned Mr. Strong once before," she said, slowly. "The understanding is that his acceptance of your warning very nearly cost him his life."

Julia shivered where she sat, and looked down. Captain McClintock had told that story to Van Dorn. But how was she to know that Mark Strong himself had not confided it to the sister? Before she could make response of any sort, Strong rose, with much of his usual calm.

"I am sorry to leave your supper-table on this errand," he said courteously to Mrs. Van Dorn, "but I must go back with Mrs. Llewellyn, and see what there is in this thing."

His countenance was equal, his voice level and controlled; he would not shame her before them all, though he could not, in his own mind, be sure that this was not another trap into which she was seeking to lead him.

"No — no!" she protested. "You mustn't go with me. Stay here. You are safe — they won't attack you here. I" — her passionate voice faltered — "I warned them at the Twin Brothers

about the plan to burn the head-tower; but," piteously, "I didn't think Captain McClintock believed me — of course he wouldn't. Yet he'll act on it somewhat — enough to save the washer, I'm sure. Stay here!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHILDREN OF THE TIDES

DURING this discussion Van Dorn had more than once flushed, opened his lips as though to interrupt, and checked himself.

"There's another point that you folks seem to overlook," he said, finally. "If Mr. Strong is going into danger" (Who knew better than the owner of the *Gloriana* that this was so, and exactly what that danger was?) "if he thinks he's going into danger, he certainly doesn't want to drag a woman into peril with him," and a very thinly veiled expression of ill-will was turned upon the little man in gray.

"But has it not occurred to you that what might be danger for me, might be safety for Mrs. Llewellyn?" said Strong, so quietly that part of the company did not notice the bitter significance of his words. But Julia noted it, and wrung her hands with nervous impatience.

"Well, then, let's go — let's go. I may be of

some use to Mr. Strong. He will certainly be in no more danger with me than without me."

With the words she cast an imploring look at her old lover; and the two were moving toward the open window, when Van Dorn put himself in their way.

"Why doesn't Mrs. Llewellyn stay here?" he demanded in a low, uneven voice — a voice thick with passion.

"Celia, I know you want her to remain."

He addressed his wife in an almost menacing tone, which made this rather an assertion than an appeal. His reddened eyes flashed upon her. Mrs. Van Dorn took her old friend's hand.

"Julia, you know you are welcome. Stay, if you think it would be better," she said. Then, bending closer, and speaking in a lowered tone, "Do you know where your son is? I saw him this evening."

The words were not so low but they reached Van Dorn's ears. He started; and now he turned a look that was almost terror upon his wife.

"You were mistaken," he said, roughly. "You know how near-sighted you are — how dare you assert that you would recognize the boy at — at that distance?"

The circle of listening faces about Van Dorn would have been a study for a painter; Julia's full

of distress and apprehension; Jane's — in entire though uncomprehending sympathy with Tulley — expressing anger and distrust; the colonel leaning forward with a puzzled smile; Mrs. Van Dorn pale and desperate looking, past resenting the affront of her husband's words.

"At what distance?" Strong's clear, even tones cut across their strained anticipation.

"Why — I — I thought she mentioned seeing him from — the road," stammered Van Dorn, cursing his folly and his quick temper for the luckless speech.

"Where did you see Mrs. Llewellyn's son?" Strong now asked Celia. He felt sure that wherever the boy was, there lay his danger.

"At the office of the *Gloriana*," replied Mrs. Van Dorn, in a very low voice.

She did not know what shameful secret she might be betraying. She had not intended to tell of this before them all. She reminded herself that Van Dorn was the father of her children, that his name was theirs; and she added no details.

"What was he doing? When did you see him?" demanded her husband, in a strained half-whisper.

On her answer to this he felt depended his conduct that night. Van Dorn's wife looked full into his eyes and answered, slowly:

"I saw him going into the office."

Tulley heaved a sigh of relief. After all, the boy no doubt lay there safely yet. There were hours between him and whatever exposure must come. As for what Celia thought, or why she did not betray the fact that she had seen her husband with young Llewellyn, that husband gave no consideration to it. She was become a very small factor in his calculations.

"That looks black enough," said Colonel Harbury. "Young Llewellyn is prominent in the Union. Has he been a strike leader?"

He spoke with cold insulting disregard for the boy's mother, who listened to him.

"No," said Van Dorn. "This strike was brought on by my known intention to put Bob in as a boss. He hasn't affiliated with the strikers, though he went out with the rest of the men. I advised him to, if he wanted to retain his position in the Union."

The last was said with a sort of bravado, as he glanced about upon his listeners.

"Why don't we do something?" cried Jane, impatiently. "We stand here talking; and if the woman's story has anything in it, this work is going forward. Why don't we do something?"

"Well said," agreed Strong, almost cheerfully,

with a swift, unreadable glance from Jane's flushed, handsome, shallow countenance to Julia's pale, distraught face with its eloquent eyes. He had made an unostentatious request for his hat, which was now put in his hand by a servant. "I'm off, Mrs. Van Dorn. Don't worry about me," he said, kindly. "I've come through some very tight places, you know."

As Tulley Van Dorn looked at Julia, waiting there to go forth into that night's unknown terrors and dangers with Mark Strong — the man she had come there despite all difficulties to warn and save, "If you're going, I'll go with you," he cried, sharply, on the impulse of the moment. And when Julia stepped from the window, she was followed by the two men. Outside, the three halted in the cool dark. Surely no stranger trio ever took the road together! Yet, in some degree there was a common danger, and it led to a consultation over their next move.

"We'd better walk down the hill and get the trolley," said Van Dorn. "You're safer in Iroquois now than you could be anywhere about here. If you take my advice, you'll go to the station as quick as you can, and take a train for Chicago."

"Run?" inquired Strong, incredulously. He said but the one word; yet Van Dorn dropped that line of argument.

"Well, we'd better be moving. Take my hand, Mrs. Llewellyn. Give your other to Strong. Now, let's go down the hill as quietly as we can, and wait for the car."

Half-way down they were overtaken by a roaring avalanche of song and profanity, punctuated by pistol-shots; a wagon load of drunken miners, returning from the Fourth of July picnic. They were just now indulging in the humorous pastime of shooting at the ears of the mules, as they showed up against the far lights of the town. Their marksmanship was such that the mules were in no immediate danger; but the three by the roadside shrank back into the bushes, and Strong, who knew of old what revelations the flash of a pistol might make, caught Julia and drew her after him down into the shallow, dry ditch, where they were entirely secure from observation. Van Dorn's crouching figure was seen by the revellers and made the subject for much jest. And as the wagon load of whooping, reckless, drunken men rolled on past, the three stood once more in the roadway.

"Julia," whispered Strong, quietly, "let us take you back to Mrs. Van Dorn's. You'll be safe there. The men have no idea of attacking Mr. Stanley's home."

Strong used the name of Van Dorn's father-in-

law, and the latter winced. He well knew that no home would be spared because it was his.

"No, no," protested Julia, feverishly. "Let's get to the trolley. I can't go back. I don't know where Rob is. Nobody will hurt me."

This assertion was so reasonable, that they held their way until they stood beside the track. It was well that they heeded Strong's warning, and did not put themselves out in the light; for the first car that whirled past, with clanging gong and the blinding flash of lights, had been taken possession of by a crowd who made the party in the wagon seem tame and mild by comparison.

There were no women with these men, and Strong held it to be an indication that Julia's information was correct. They were ready to fight; and like the savage when he goes upon the war-path, they had left the women and children behind.

Some motorman from one of the mines was in charge of the motor, with the rightful incumbent tied and protesting, half in anger, half-laughing. The conductor had been dropped off, because nobody wanted to pay fare, and no more passengers were desired. And, indeed, the car was full enough. Howling, singing, shrieking, they sped past the watchers by the roadway, and Van Dorn commented:

"Well, this is getting to be serious."

"There's no use talking about the trolley," was Strong's conclusion. "I doubt if we could find a safe car to-night, or if we would be safe on a lighted car, anyhow."

"I am going back and get my auto," suddenly declared Van Dorn.

"And be picked off as you go along. Everybody knows that you've got the only auto in the Iroquois district. It would be no trouble for the men who are out gunning for you, to find you," remonstrated Strong.

"We would be safer afoot than any other way," Julia put in, quietly.

"We men can walk, but you couldn't," objected Van Dorn.

And suddenly it came upon the three of them that they all desired to go in different directions. Strong was eager to get back to the Twin Brothers. Julia, for all her loyalty to him, was frantic with anxiety concerning Bob, and would have hastened to the ranks of the strikers to find him. As for Van Dorn, it would be natural to suppose that he desired to go to the Gloriana — but he showed no anxiety about his mine.

"Julia," said Strong, as these things became plain, "shall I take you to the Twin Brothers with

me? I'm willing to strike through the woods here for the edge of my own land, and I think it is not more than two miles."

"No, no," shuddered the woman. "Mr. Van Dorn is right; you would be better off in Iroquois. Let us go there."

Strong acquiesced silently.

"I have a quick little motor-boat down here in the boat-house," announced Van Dorn. "Let's take that."

The idea seemed a good one, and the three set off through the edge of the grove to where the lesser river wound down to join the Father of Waters. The owner of the *Gloriana* opened the small boat-house with his key, turned on the lights, and inspected his boat. Nobody had tampered with it. Probably nobody had thought of it. Soon the three were afloat in the dark, with the motor making no noise, since they were drifting down with the current.

"This is the very thing," whispered Van Dorn, excitedly. "Are you comfortable there, Mrs. Llewellyn? Nobody will think of this, and we'll be in Iroquois before a lick can be struck."

Julia knelt and clutched the boat's edge with nervous fingers, her strained eyes searching the dark toward Iroquois.

As they neared the town, it became evident that the disorder there was unusual, even for a Fourth of July celebration. Indeed, no rockets were going up; but a continual flare of light, hoarse voices, and the remittent clanging of a bell, showed where a house was burning. Again and again came a round of small explosions.

"Are those guns, or only giant crackers?" asked Julia, anxiously.

Then, upon a sudden gust of the breeze, was borne to them a fiercer yell than they had yet heard. They strained their senses to listen, and finally realized that it fell in rhythmical beat upon the ear. A company of men had evidently joined their voices to roar out something which resembled a college yell. In intense listening silence those in the boat drifted nearer. Gradually the heavy bass chorus disentangled itself from the other noises of that night.

**"Strong! Strong!
He won't last long!
Whoopee! Whoopee! Whoopee!"**

boomed the shout across the black, still water. The little man in gray chuckled grimly:

"He may last long enough to see you get the licking that's laid up for you."

They swung in almost abreast of the main street,

which ran down to the landing, the point at which the lesser river widened to the great one.

"You'd better not try to land there, Strong," cautioned Van Dorn. "Let's slip off here in the dark, and skirt the crowd. God knows what those dirty beggars up there would do to you."

Julia's eyes were fixed on the quiet face of her old lover. In all the terror of the moment, he was something certain and stable to hold to.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"I shouldn't be much afraid to try it," Strong said, with knitted brows. "It isn't very dangerous to face a crowd—in the light, that way. You're generally safer than you would be trying to dodge 'em in the dark. If we didn't have Mrs. Llewellyn with us, I'd go straight up. I think we could make it. They'd be taken by surprise to see us walk in among them."

"They can be surprised when they see me try a thing of the sort," said Van Dorn, shaking his head. "Nobody ever called me a coward, but half of those fellows are too drunk to know what they're about."

"We must think of some other way, then," said Strong, reasonably. But it was not to be left for their deciding. The great curtain was already going up; the whistle of Fate had sounded its cue to the main actors in this drama; these three, who had

their appointed parts to play, could not choose when or in what wise they would come on the stage, nor elect whether or not they would come at all.

"Shall I use the motor to hold the boat where she is?" whispered Van Dorn; for the current was bearing them down.

He leaned forward and grasped Strong's arm. "Shall I? We'll be into the light in a minute, if we don't do something," he urged.

But the keen hearing of the little man in gray had caught a sound from down-stream. Julia, too, heard it, and, with a vague accession of terror, clung to Mark's other arm.

"What is it?" she murmured. "What's coming?"

As they hung so, scarce breathing, straining eye and ear into the darkness, there rounded the bend below Iroquois and swam into their amazed sight in mid-stream, coming grandly up the river, glowing with light from stem to stern, a great launch filled with troops. As they stared amazed, a flare of music burst forth.

"What's that?" demanded Strong sharply of Van Dorn. "Are you bringing in militia to-night?"

Van Dorn had stood up and was leaning forward, staring in dismay at the approaching boat.

"Oh, damn it! — such fools! It's a mistake — all a miserable mistake," he groaned. "I had them spoken for if things got too hot to hold us here — but great Heaven! they were only to come when I telephoned for them."

"Well, they're here now," said Strong, briefly. "They're showing just about their usual amount of sense. Good God! To think of those men flaring up the river with their lights all lit, and their band playing! It beats anything that I ever knew of even militia doing!"

Van Dorn's voice had been raised incautiously; now a sound, to one side of them in the darkness, made Strong put out his hand with a warning, "Hush!"

As the lighted boat turned her nose to the bank in preparation for landing, a big, dark form, coming out of the tributary river where it emptied into the Mississippi, just above Main street, grazed so close to the small motor-boat that Julia cried out in fright. It took its way down in the shadow of the bank. Perhaps it was a barge. Perhaps it was a lumber raft which had torn loose from its moorings above.

On the landing they could see the procession deploying into the open space. The men came in some order, and to the heavy, united tramp of feet, they timed the words,

**“Strong! Strong!
He won’t last long!”**

This with hootings, unformulated cries, and shouts of —

“The Union! The Union!”

“Hurrah for labour!”

“Down with monopolies!” and the like, sounded along the line.

Transparencies were carried aloft displaying **“Liberty or death!”** **“Down with the trusts!”** **“Patterson!”** and similar inscriptions. The militia were making ready to land.

“They ought not to walk right into that parade,” muttered Strong. **“It looks as though they were hunting trouble.”**

If they were hunting trouble, they found it — and that right speedily.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SUCKED DOWN

SUDDENLY, like a transformation scene at a theatre, almost like the bursting forth of a pyrotechnic display, the thing which had looked like a barge — a raft — a pile of driftwood — lighted up from end to end. It was a launch almost as big as that one which had carried the troops.

A single man steered it, about its edges lay large tarpaulins, and people held their breath to see the strange craft come on, without a sound or movement of life on board.

Something shining under the edge of one of the tarpaulins caught Julia's eye. "Look!" she whispered to Strong, and pointed to that gleam of metallic reflection.

The little man in gray nodded.

"Armed men," he said. "They're slipping up on these fools of militia — no wonder! To think of their exposing themselves like that, and a brass band going!"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the big, apparently empty boat swung broadside against the militia launch.

"Hi! Hi! Hi!" shouted the captain of the troop boat. "Look out, there! Get out of the way!"

But getting out of the way was the last thing the solitary steersman of the empty boat intended. As the sides of the boats came together, the tarpaulins were thrown back, and with a whoop the men who had lain concealed under them rose to their feet, guns in hand. Owen Llewellyn's tall form towered prominent among them.

"Take your dough-boys out of here!" he shouted; he apparently led the attacking party. "They can't land here. They're not wanted at Iroquois."

"Dough-boys! Yah — dough-boys!"

"Down with 'em!"

"Why don't you fire into 'em?" ran the shouts from the landing above.

"Don't let your men point their guns this way," Llewellyn's voice went on, with a great oath, as he saw some of the militiamen getting ready to defend themselves. "It'll be the worse for them if they do. We're peaceful men" (they looked it), "but we won't stand everything. There don't any

militia camp in the hills around Iroquois. We've not broken the law, and we don't propose to be treated with criminals. Take your damned, murdering dough-boys back down-stream!"

Nobody knows who fired that first shot. Nobody ever does know, when all is over. The miners will claim, to the end of time, that the shot came from the State troops. These, on their part, asserted that it struck the side of their boat, and was fired from the landing above. Be that as it may, it was the signal for a short range fusilade.

The militia were taken unaware, a fatal error in a soldier, and hardly possible to regular troops inured to actual warfare. Three were killed, a dozen more wounded, and six jumped into the water. Those that remained returned the fire with some coolness and better aim than the miners had used.

As for the strikers, they ran to the edge of their boat, hoping to board the launch, and attack the troops at close quarters — apparently not a man on board either craft had presence of mind enough to think of grappling the two boats to prevent careening.

"Look out!" yelled the man at the wheel, as the big shell dipped and heeled over frightfully under the suddenly shifted weight.

A great, sleek wave of muddy water heaved up

between the two boats. The aim of even those miners who retained their guns was destroyed; the militia were still firing at them; and their friends from the landing above, who had concluded it was time to come to their assistance, rendered their peril still greater, since the two craft were so close together, and so unsteady, that a shot aimed at one was quite liable to hit the other. As the boat careened, the men drew back with a concerted outcry; yet, though a voice yelled "Trim her!" no one actually moved from the inner side, but all crouched there, seemingly paralyzed.

Every movable article on board slid to the lower side. Two men went overboard, and sank between the boats. A pandemonium of cries, groans, and screamed advice, commands and entreaties, burst forth and raged. The big shell trembled a moment, half on its side; the water rushed in; it dropped lower, and, while the yells, shrieks, curses, and groans rose wilder and madder, filled and sank. Then there was an instant of heartsick silence.

"Now — now!" said Strong. "If the troops will pick those fellows up — it will break the strike."

As Strong always did, he had seen straight to the centre of the coil. This was indeed the psychological moment. The simple movement of humanity

suggested by him would have proved the key to all the seemingly insoluble problems then forming, and struggled over for terrible months afterward.

But there was no one on the troop boat who saw as Mark Strong saw. Nothing, it would seem, was further from its captain's thought than such an action as the little man in gray had proposed. He ran his launch coolly past the drowning men, and made fast to the landing.

And so the old, old seed of hate — hate between the classes — was passed on; here it was sown again, and in fertile ground, which would have received and nourished, as well, the planting for peace.

A queer, long, shrill, animal-like wail went up from those on shore. Then there was an instant's hush. And then, men cursed the barbarous act aloud. Women screamed and fainted, or begged those about them to go to the aid of father, husband, or brother, drowning before their eyes. Many who could swim leaped in to their comrades who were plainly unable to do so.

"We must get you ashore, Julia," said Strong. "This boat is a tight fit for three; and if I had it alone, I could help some of those fellows."

They ran the small craft in to the landing close beside the larger launch. The shore was a wild mass of confused figures. The drowning miners

were being helped from the water; those who could do so were swimming out.

"Quick!" whispered Strong, watching the struggling forms in the river, as he stood up in the boat to help Julia ashore.

As she rose to her feet to obey, she suddenly became aware of her son in the crowd on the landing. And at the same instant Bob saw Van Dorn. Hate blazed in his young face, and sounded in the exultant voice with which he shrilled to some one behind him:

"That's him! There he is! Give me my gun!"

For one frozen second of time the woman could not move. Then she flung herself upon the breast of her old lover, interposing her body between him and the death which she thought threatened him.

"No — no!" she screamed. "No, no, Bob! Not him — me!" Then came the pistol-shot. Her hold relaxed; her glowing eyes filmed, clouded, and Strong's arms closed about her and supported her. She sank against him, blood flowing down to mingle with the wine stains on her white robe, and to trickle warm over the hands that held her.

Van Dorn had watched these things — which take so much longer to tell than they did to happen — like a man in a dream. His one thought, when he saw Bob Llewellyn living and vengeful, threatening

him from the bank, was a desperate anxiety to get to the boy and silence him before those lips could pronounce the ruin which they were prepared to call down upon his late employer.

Strong eased Julia gently down, keeping his arm beneath her face, and searching swiftly, desperately, with the fingers of his free hand to stanch the bleeding, which seemed to proceed from her right shoulder. He let her sink on to her side — almost on her face — and, having found the spot of the welling blood, pressed his folded handkerchief firmly against it.

Meantime, Van Dorn caught sight of a familiar face among the troops going across the gangplank. Without a look at the bleeding woman or her ministrant, he stepped over the prostrate form, leaping to the edge of the little boat, rocking it perilously, and sprung upon the launch's gangway, grasping this officer's arm, crying:

"There. Lieutenant Birkett. There's the man that fired the shot."

And he pointed to Bob. The boy was frantically fighting his way down to the water's edge to get to his mother. He had seen with agonized eyes, her action, and its consequence.

"I'll see her! God! she's my mother, I tell you! I don't care if they do take me! I'll go to her!"

Leave loose of me!" he cried to those who were restraining him.

The case was plain. Birkett considered that he did no more than his duty when he seized the struggling lad and hurried him away with a squad which was marching toward the road that led into the hills.

"That's it," muttered Van Dorn, feverishly, in the soldier's ear. "We'll have military law proclaimed here to-morrow, if the rioting continues, as it's bound to do—as we have word that it's planned to do. The governor has promised me that if things run to a certain height here, he will let you fellows have a chance to straighten us up. You take that young devil out with you, and he'll be in the military prison to-morrow."

Once ashore, Birkett formed his men; but the spirit was all out of the strikers. Two bodies had been recovered from the river, and the mates of the men were working over them trying to resuscitate them. Women were weeping, wringing their hands, asking wildly for those who had not been found. A douche of cold water is wonderfully cooling to the passions of a mob.

And Van Dorn was hurrying up into the streets of the town, without a look to cast behind him toward the woman he had sworn he loved so madly,

and who lay, apparently bleeding to death, back in the little boat, her head upon the knees of her old lover. After all, when it comes to the pinch, a man of Van Dorn's sort fights the hardest for his own skin.

The streets of Iroquois, aside from the hurry and lament incident to the calamity at the river front, were apparently quiet, when, suddenly, at seven different points upon the hillsides about, shot up a tongue of flame. The head towers of the seven mines were being burned. Well, there was matter enough in the town itself to keep those within its boundaries from hastening to any of the fires.

Strong addressed the first face that came within the circle of his vision, which had anything but panic fright written upon it.

"Here, you," he said, gently, but peremptorily. "Is there a doctor about?"

"There's one over there where they're rolling Dempsey on a barrel," faltered the owner of the semi intelligent countenance.

"Bring him here," ordered Strong.

He sat, almost deserted, in the mad rush toward the spectacle of the rescued or drowning men.

"I don't know if I'll get him," faltered the other, dubiously.

"He'll come," said the even, quiet voice. "Tell

him that Mark Strong says he must come here and look after Mrs. Llewellyn. She has been shot."

A moment later saw the physician bending over the unconscious form, and examining the wound.

"How is it, doctor?" Strong asked pleadingly.

"Well, the right shoulder-blade is pretty badly shattered — I see she was shot from behind," the physician made answer. "I can't tell much about the internal damage. The heart's all right. The ball went high. I rather hope there's no deep injury at all; but the loss of blood is terrible. We must get this bleeding stopped, and then get her moved."

He had been working while he talked. Strong helped him to tear bandages from the edge of the white robe; he gave no little assistance in putting these bandages in place, and then the stretcher which he had sent for was ready, and she was carried up into the town.

As Mark followed the stretcher up the bank, somebody came running breathlessly after him to gasp, "Mr. Strong, the head tower of your mine is burning out!"

If he heard, he gave no sign of having done so. His eyes were on the motionless form carried before him; his mind was with that other night, when Julia had come to warn him — and the warning had so nearly cost him his life. How ready he had

been to believe the worst of her. Poor girl! She had apparently given her own life to-night to prove that she was innocent of any evil intent toward him that other time, as well as to save him now.

At the head of the street, again one running overtook them.

"You're needed back there, Doc," the messenger panted, laying importunate hands on the young physician. "We've just hauled a man out of the water that's been shot. He's lost a lot of blood, and you've got to come and look after him. And Dempsey—he's in an awful way. They said fer God's sake to come."

The young fellow turned a perplexed countenance upon Strong.

"Will it do to carry her far?" Mark asked.

"It won't hurt a bit," the physician gave his opinion. "I shouldn't dare try to find that ball to-night. You'll have to get somebody else to attend her, anyhow. Well, I'll go, then;" and he turned back.

Strong had seen Bob among the rioters, and, later, dragged away by the militia; he saw Owen Llewellyn go down in the muddy water, and he had no knowledge of a rescue. If Julia were left in Iroquois, she must face tragic disaster as soon as consciousness returned; and who, in all that panic-

stricken town, full of its own griefs and disasters, would nurse and care for her?

As if in answer to the query, old Pat Carmody, with a bloody bandage around his head, pushed through the crowd.

“Julia Llewellyn?” he cried, looking at the injured woman, as she lay so white and still. “Take her to my shanty, Mr. Strong,” he urged. “Kitty will nurse her, if she’s livin’; and we’ll give her a wake that shall be remembered, if she’s dead. God bless her for the sweetest woman that iver came t’rough a man’s door whin there was throuble in his house!”

He had scarcely completed this invitation, when two or three militiamen swooped down on him and carried him away, still calling back unintelligible offers to the owner of the Twin Brothers.

Strong had a competent surgeon at the mine whom he had brought from Chicago a few weeks before to attend some of his men who were injured about their work. He did not know what scene of violence he might be running into out there, but he was confident of his own power to keep things in order inside the dead-line, and it was his intention to carry Julia to his own house — the house which should have been hers — and secure for her the

peace, quiet, and attention which he saw no chance of getting elsewhere.

The only ambulance the little town afforded was brought into requisition. The journey was made swiftly and easily, Strong sitting in the vehicle beside the patient, holding her hand. Twice she roused from the semiconscious condition into which she had fallen; once to say only, "It's dark in here," and once to whisper, with an evident realization of where she was and who was with her:

"You know, now, Mark, that I never meant —"

"Yes, Julia, dear girl," Strong answered. "I know that you never meant to harm me. I know that you thought they were going to attack me in the road that—that night." The anguish of his heart forbade further speech, to even his disciplined, contained nature.

They carried her through that doorway which she should have entered as a bride, across which her foot had never passed. They bore her up the broad stairway, and laid her on the bed, which poor, stumbling Demas had made ready.

"Where's the Captain?" asked Strong, as soon as he entered the house.

"He's over at the mine. The strikers set the head tower on fire, and if we hadn't had a good fire brigade we'd have lost the new washer," said Demas,

importantly. "Tell you, Mr. Strong, them niggers jist worked like men."

Strong's doctor had been summoned by a messenger who ran ahead of the ambulance, and he arrived at the house almost as soon as his patient.

For half an hour the upper floor was given over to the wizardry of modern surgery, with its scientific paraphernalia of sterilized instruments, aseptic dressing, and inexorable calm. Emotion was not merely at a discount; it was strictly prohibited. After a rebandaging, which was an endorsement of the younger man's decision not to search for the ball that night, the physician came to Strong with his cheerful professional manner, saying:

"I'll need one good nurse here, if not two. Maybe some of those negro women would do, at a pinch."

Strong shook his head. "I'll telephone to Chicago," he said, briefly; "but, meantime, I think maybe I could help you. I'm a good nurse."

The doctor looked in some wonder at this hard-headed man of business, who proposed to shut himself in a sickroom, to nurse an injured woman, while the town was in a state of riot, and his property was being burned.

"Well," he said, finally, "I can send Mrs. Atchley over from the boarding-house. She would stay until morning, and maybe part of to-morrow."

"Yes," assented Strong, absently. "Will you telephone for exactly what you want in the way of a nurse?"

He followed the doctor into the library where the telephone was.

"Don't spare anything, doctor," he said. "Act just as though I were the patient in question."

And then he turned again to the room where Julia lay, white, with closed eyes, upon her bed.

The telephone brought Mrs. Atchley, a big, motherly woman, with an aptitude for nursing, and much experience. Strong's clerical force were white men, of course; and some of the twenty-five or thirty non-Union miners who, attracted by the better work afforded in the Twin Brothers, had stuck by him, were single men. Such of these as needed a boarding-place made their home with Mrs. Atchley; she had kept a boarding-house at the Twin Brothers mine since Mark Strong had been its superintendent and general manager. She bustled about the house now, going to Mrs. Graves's room and seeking proper wear for the wounded woman; opening the sewing-machine and setting it a-whir to contrive from soft, fine, old linen sheets, a garment which could be slipped upon her without moving her arm or shoulder. When all was done, she came down-stairs to Mark to report:

"She's just as comfortable as I can make her. If the doctor didn't talk so solemn about that ball, and the 'developments' there may be when he goes to try to get it out, I shouldn't be a mite uneasy about her. But, Mr. Strong, I've got to go back home to-night. I've got a right sick child. You'll know that I'm at the end of the telephone; if you want me for anything, just you call me. I'll be over here about sun-up — and that isn't more than an hour and a half, now," she finished.

Mark saw her go, and went back to sit by the side of his one-time love. There she lay, the girl he had thought to make his wife, the woman he had not cared to seek when, later, he might have done so. Those mobile lips, so prone to smiles and speech, were closed now; yet they plead eloquently with Mark Strong. Poor Julia, she had had a hard time. It had been easy for him to say, "Let the error lie. Things are better as they are." He had succeeded. He spoke from the hills of victory. But poor Julia, in the valley of humiliation and defeat, had it been equally easy for her to be passed over?

He had left it for people to say that Mark Strong had outgrown his early love for Julia Copeland. He had been ready to believe her in the wrong when appearances were against her, and it seemed that she had assisted in an attempt upon his life. Look-

ing at her face, lying there on the pillow, it seemed the maddest of fancies that he ever could have believed such a thing of her.

If she got well — suddenly that “if” seemed to spread and fill his whole world with its chill doubt. With this thought weighing upon his heart, he could not bear to be so far from her. He went and knelt by the bed, and took her passive hand in his. It was at once a keen pain, and the only comfort left him, to gaze thus upon her.

And so he remained until the dawn, stealing in, began to pale the artificial lights. Then her clear eyes suddenly unclosed and regarded him.

CHAPTER XXV.

“ MARK’S WAY ”

“ DEAR,” Strong’s quiet voice faltered, “ can you hear me? Do you understand when I speak to you? ”

She turned her head upon the pillow, with a lovely smile, which was his best answer. Yet it was an answer that brought tears to his eyes. Those brown orbs — lamps of love, he had once called them — seemed to say to him :

“ I should hear you if I were even nearer the other world than I am.”

“ Julia, love, you are in your own house — in your home. You are with me, who love you. We’ll fight death off, together ; won’t we, dear girl? ”

There was no power of utterance ; but the full lips shaped themselves to “ yes.”

“ You’ll live, for me, because I haven’t done what was right by you — ” a sob rent his speech in twain. “ You should have been my wife years ago — but we’ll make it right now, won’t we? ”

Again her eyes lightened upon him, and her lips seemed as though they would have uttered assent.

“Do you understand, dear girl, that I am asking you to be married now — here — to-day?”

Something like a smile flitted over her face. She whispered, unintelligibly, as he bent close to catch the words:

“My . . . so like . . . Mark. . . .”

Yet it pierced his heart to see the tender satisfaction in her eyes; to find that, facing death as she was, there was room for a little pride that she was to be made Mark Strong’s wife before she went.

In all his assured, self-sufficient life, he had received no such lesson. He took it quietly; though his soul rocked and quivered and ached with it, it was not in him to make loud demonstration of his feelings. He told those about him that he and Mrs. Llewellyn were to have been married, and that the wedding would be hastened so that he might have the privilege of nursing her. That was the only explanation offered for this strange bridal. And he went to the ’phone and added some orders for things which he desired to have the nurse bring with her from Chicago.

When her lover asked her this question in the dawn, there was still vitality enough that Julia could smile upon him and look her answer. But as the

day wore on — Mark watching always for sign of a rally from the shock, some revival of strength — she sank more and more into a state that was little better than coma, a condition which all about her save Strong believed to be but the presage of death.

It was here as it had been in the more material crises of his life; none believed with him, none supported him in his belief; he was left to bear alone the burden of his own griefs, and the added burden of their doubts and fears.

And the indomitable soul in this slender, under-sized body took up these burdens as it had those others, and carried them unfalteringly, almost cheerfully.

The nurse from Chicago did not arrive until the late dusk was closing in; she had delayed an hour or so to make the desired purchases in the city. When she came it had been decided to hold the ceremony at once; by Mark, because he saw there was no hope of a more favourable time; by the doctor and the others, in the fear that, if it were not hastened, Strong would be cheated of even this poor solace. Demas had been sent to fetch Julia's pastor.

"Shall you probe for the ball before or after?" Miss Hepburn had asked when she first arrived.

The doctor answered not at all in words; he

shook his head almost imperceptibly, and led her glance with his own to where that death-like face lay on the pillow..

While Mark and the doctor waited outside for Demas to return with young Edwards, the two women, making poor Julia and her room ready for the strange ceremony, murmured together in lowered voices.

“I talked to Mr. Strong myself over the wire,” said Miss Hepburn, the nurse, as she and Mrs. Atchley laid out her purchases. “I should have known him anywhere, by his voice — it’s so peculiarly earnest. He told me they were to be married, and asked me to bring something for her to wear. He said he wanted everything very fine, yet it would have to be suited for a sick-bed. But I got the idea she was much less seriously hurt than she is.”

“She’ll never get well in the world,” murmured Mrs. Atchley. “We’ll just about dress her in some of these beautiful things for her coffin — poor girl!”

“I’m afraid so,” Miss Hepburn rejoined, with unprofessional tears in her eyes. “He doesn’t seem to see it, but I’m afraid he’s only marrying a heart-ache.”

“He sees it,” corrected Mrs. Atchley, solemnly; “Mark Strong sees anything there is to see. He

just refuses to accept this. He's all his life made things come round as he wanted them; and now he believes, poor soul, that he can keep Julia from dying, if he's only determined enough to do so."

Julia's splendid body had been drained of blood till, as she lay with closed eyes, she looked not a dying woman, but one already dead. When the women had slipped the pale hands through the sleeves, and settled the delicate tracery of lace about her throat, she was, indeed, beautiful, but with a beauty not of this world. Her long hair lay across her pillow as Mrs. Atchley had braided it in two great braids, for that wrestle with death which she had realized was before her.

Mark entered with the young preacher; behind them came the doctor, and Demas with Captain McClintock. The earnest young fellow whom Celia Van Dorn had thought too much of a boy to be consulted in serious matters bore himself like a chaplain in time of war. He had come from scenes calculated to try his fibre, and he had not failed. Some of his parishioners were dead, some dying; some stood accused of murders; and many more of murderous and vindictive acts. Julia Llewellyn's strange marriage, in its tragic setting, came as the finish to the wild experiences which had been crowded upon him in the past two days.

With a quick, sympathetic look at the faces about him, a glance at the arrangement of the bed, he moved silently round behind it, sat down upon its farther edge, and, opening his book at the marriage service, leaned over toward the white figure upon the pillows.

Strong knelt beside her, his face almost on a level with hers. He lifted her waxen hand and held it clasped in his.

"I think we are ready now, Mr. Edwards," he said, in a firm, quiet voice.

Stooping his lips almost to the transparent ear, the young clergyman began the service. In a remote corner Mrs. Atchley and Miss Hepburn were drawn together, tearful, holding each other's hands. Near the doorway, with the doctor, were the Captain and Demas, with pale faces, and the look of people under a painful stress of feeling, which they sought vainly to escape.

Young Edwards proceeded with the few simple questions to which he had reduced the stately marriage ceremony. Mark answered in a low voice, but one which lacked nothing of firmness.

When the first demand was made of the stark figure between the priest and bridegroom, intense silence followed it; Miss Hepburn's professional calm deserted her unexpectedly, and a little stifled

sob sounded upon the stillness. That which shook them all with a fear that was almost horror was the thought that the question might have been put to a woman already dead.

Then — as though in answer to the look her lover bent upon her, those eyelids fluttered weakly up, the clear eyes turned slowly upon him. He glanced at the preacher with an almost imperceptible nod, and Edwards replied with a slight affirmative movement. Poor Julia's response was held sufficient.

It was at the conclusion of this strange and piteous ceremony, when poor Julia had made her last response, seemingly calling her fluttering spirit back from the borders of the Infinite to answer Mark Strong's entreaty — it was when the preacher's low, grave voice had pronounced the marriage itself, and the benediction thereon, that these eyes opened, for once, of themselves, and widely. She even moved her head a little from side to side, looking intently and questioningly first upon her lover, then upon the clergyman bending over her, book in hand. A strange light dawned over her face, something more beautiful than a smile; and Strong felt the cool, almost transparent hand that lay in his tremble a little, and the fingers strive to close themselves about his fingers.

His own eyes were lifted to young Edwards's, in

a look of quick entreaty, that was instantly comprehended. He motioned backward with his free hand to those in the room; and they withdrew instantly and noiselessly, at the same time that the young preacher rose and joined them. And Mark Strong's head dropped upon the pillow beside Julia's.

There was no soul of those about them who believed for a moment that Julia would live. Even the doctor, in his secret heart, deemed it impossible that her exhaustion should ever be able to endure the removal of the bullet, the rebuilding of mangled, destroyed tissues. She had bled so terribly. Her splendid, vigorous frame was despoiled of its ruddy tide of life; all strength and vitality were out of her. She seemed only not to take the last little step, only not to cease utterly to breathe; her heart yet beat faintly — and that was about all.

Even Strong admitted to himself that the struggle before them was to the uttermost; and he went to it in his own characteristic fashion.

Mark Strong had ruled his world not with loud noise, but through a still, compelling spirit which fashioned conditions unfalteringly to his will, and drew or drove men where he would. Now, with Julia, his wife, lying before him almost as one already dead, those material issues with which he

had concerned himself, became as nothing to him. Now Mark's angel was bidden in from all those activities that had engrossed the man for so many years. They were dropped from his hands as unconsidered toys, erased with one sweep from the tablets of his mind. This spirit, so strong to persuade and to command, abode all day and all night at Julia's pillow. Its unseen presence was that which held back her own soul, fluttering its doubtful wings for flight. Its hands clung fast to her trembling hands. Its powerful arms were under her sinking spirit.

Her life would seem to be utterly defeated. Surely there was not enough left in the fountain to repel the inroads of the dusty desert; not enough oil in the lamp to keep the little flickering flame from expiring, and the great dark from engulfing all. But when her weary, conquered spirit would have whispered, "Death—defeat," the strong angel cried to her instead, "Life — victory."

In the weeks that followed, the Captain was left to hold up Tawney's hands as best he could, in the administration of the Twin Brothers.

"Just do what you can, Captain," Strong said to him, with a little kindly smile. "I shall never make any reflections — not even any comments. You,

and Tawney, and Suter, and the others, are to go ahead and do as best you can. Don't tell me anything about it — this will be the last words we have on the subject — till — till Julia's out of danger." (He never admitted the other possibility.) "I don't want to think — or even to know — anything about it all. I'm willing to trust you fellows."

He scarcely left her bedside; his world came to be bounded by the four walls of that room; all the affairs of life were petty and of no account beside the question of Julia's temperature, the matter of her broth or her beef tea, the wonderful, wonderful occurrence when she looked at him, knew him, and smiled!

CHAPTER XXVI.

TULLEY VAN DORN SETS FORTH

WHEN the news of Mark Strong's marriage to Julia reached Van Dorn it rendered him desperate. The only ray of hope for him lay in the fact that she was reported to hang between life and death, with the chances against her recovery.

The insurance companies investigated his case. Their objections to paying his insurance policies were couched in perfectly parliamentary language, but they were none the less humiliating to a man of Van Dorn's temper.

"We will not go into the matter of your ultimate intentions in all this new building, Mr. Van Dorn," the lawyer had said to him, smoothly. "It may be that you intended to complete these various structures on the inside, to install machinery and make improvements which would have rendered your policies no more than sufficient — that's what we'll say. But the fact remains that these structures were, as yet, merely shells."

"The fact," echoed Van Dorn.

"A fact which the company will have no trouble in proving," pursued the lawyer, civilly. "Now you don't want this matter investigated in the courts. I think you don't. I should not, were I in your position. The company seeks nothing but its rights. The company is willing to go into court — if you are."

"The company be d——d!" said poor, tormented Van Dorn. Indeed, he was a very unskilled criminal; and he accepted the moiety of his policies which they adjudged to him.

It was not the money loss alone in this case; it was the sense of defeat, the feeling that this was the opening gun of a fight in which he was to lose all. This, growing strong upon him, led down through steps of desperation, to that night when he heard, a week after the event, that Julia was married to Mark Strong.

During the ensuing weeks he hearkened with tremulous eagerness to the reports of the sick woman's condition. It is a sorry commentary on that emotion which men of the Van Dorn stamp call love, that his heart sank, and sank, as the bulletins were more favourable, and that when word came finally that she was probably out of danger, it found him desperate.

Bob Llewellyn, released from prison, taken to Mark Strong, and peace made between the two men — Van Dorn never doubted for a moment that Julia would reconcile them; this was the grisly phantom which fronted him. He was no longer planning to leave Iroquois. The edifice of his plans had crumbled in many directions; the remainder of Celia's fine property was more desirable, more necessary to her husband now than the entire estate had ever seemed to him before. He must stay, he must grasp what shreds of respectability remained, and draw them about him. He began to pay an awkward, reluctant, grudging court to his wife's opinion. She could do much for him, if she would but endorse him fully.

Little by little the plan took shape in his mind to get Bob secretly from the Bull Pen, and smuggle him down the river to New Orleans; there he could be shanghaied on some tramp steamer and carried to the uttermost parts of the earth. It would be charitable to believe that his design, in its inception, was no worse than this.

He had arranged with Colonel Harbury, from the first, that Bob should be kept in ignorance of the fact that his mother was not killed instantly by the shot which struck her down. Now he made his bargain with the river captain, told Harbury that he

would be responsible for young Llewellyn, and that there was certain information he could get from Bob, if he were allowed to take him from the stockade. Things military were done, God wot, in most unmilitary fashion in the Iroquois district, those days.

Bob Llewellyn was brought to Van Dorn in the colonel's tent. A thin, changed, indefinitely improved Bob this was.

"They say I'm to go with you, Mr. Van Dorn," the boy said, keeping a dark gaze upon his former employer.

"Yes, Bob, you are to lead me to a certain place — you know?"

This last with a meaning glance which intimated that it was said for the benefit of the guard who still waited.

"I'll be glad to get anywhere, out of this old Pen," Bob said, quietly; and with a nod to the guard, Van Dorn set off with his prisoner.

"What about mother?" the boy asked, as soon as they were out of ear-shot.

"You know she's dead," Van Dorn flung over his shoulder. Bob was walking behind him.

"I know that I've been told she was dead every day for more than six weeks," young Llewellyn returned, doggedly. "I've been told that, and I've

been told that I killed her. Neither one of them is true."

Van Dorn turned, came back, and grasped the boy's arm.

"See here, Bob, you are going to have the truth from me to-night. Your shot didn't kill your mother right at the time, as you've been informed it did. Colonel Harbury suggested that we tell you that, to see if we couldn't get you to give some of the strikers away who were accessory to that explosion in the Culleoka. I didn't object, because everybody knew she wouldn't get well. She died last night. They'll hang you for it; and ever since I knew that she was really gone, I have been trying to plan how you could be helped out."

The boy muttered some inarticulate reply. His very flesh crawled at Van Dorn's touch; and yet, for the present, his safety lay in sticking close to this man. Robert Llewellyn had been developing fast in the past weeks. He had faced death; he had been accused of the murder of his mother; and had apprehended, while he knew himself innocent, that he might be hung for this murder. He had felt treachery, lies, suspicion, all about him. He, the petted only child of an indulgent woman, had learned at last to rely on no living soul save himself.

Owen Llewellyn was back there in the stockade —

a half-lunatic old man, raving and cursing. The Welshman's discipline had broken, and not trained him. No counsel was to be expected from this source by his nephew. So Bob thought out his own problems; and the one now before him was — would Van Dorn really care if he were hanged? Wouldn't Van Dorn be glad to have him put out of the way in any fashion? If Van Dorn said that his mother was dead, was it not likely that she was living?

Suddenly the thought came to him that Van Dorn would not trouble to get him out of the way unless Julia had recovered, or was recovering. Bob believed that his mother would know that he had not fired the shot which struck her. He felt sure that the accusation of her death was the only one which could silence him and put him out of Van Dorn's path. Things began to be clear to him. He had been walking with bent head; now he aroused himself to hear Van Dorn saying:

"I've got a little money together for you, and I've paid a safe man to carry you down the river. When you get to New Orleans, there's a sea-captain who will take you on board. You'll have to work your way, but an able young fellow like you ought to do well."

Van Dorn had talked so earnestly that he had half-way convinced himself.

"We'll get over to the river here, below my house," he went on, "and then we'll float to the landing in my launch."

Bob looked up at the bright windows of Van Dorn's home, where the lamplight shone through the trees. Should he make a bolt and try to get there? No, he was a prisoner out on leave. There was a possibility that what Van Dorn said might be true. In any case, he would be retaken and carried back to the stockade. He followed his guard quietly, only seeking some pretext for escape.

The night was dark with a little drizzle of rain; the air cool, with the approach of autumn; even a few dead leaves rustled under foot, and drops struck upon them with an intermittent patter.

They reached the boat-house, and Van Dorn drew back for Bob to enter first. He was already inside when he heard a man's voice say:

"Mr. Van Dorn, I want a word with you."

Van Dorn closed the door on Bob, and went quickly back, as though the voice were familiar, and he knew who it was that was addressing him, and upon what errand.

"Well?" he said, impatiently. "I've got an im-

portant piece of business on hand. Be quick about whatever you've got to say."

The two men drew away from the door, which the owner had been careful to close, that their conversation might not be overheard. Yet, as their tempers waxed, scraps of their speech drifted in to the waiting boy.

"I told you I wouldn't stand for it," the newcomer said. Van Dorn plainly made some pacific reply, to which the other answered, "No you don't — you're fixin' up another dirty piece of business — and then you'll want to saddle the blame of it on me. I tell you, Mr. Van Dorn, you've got to walk a chalk-line from this out. I've got my eye on you."

Rage rendered Van Dorn incautious.

"I was a fool," he said, "when I trusted you with any knowledge. I might have known you'd blackmail me."

"'Tain't blackmailin' to make you behave yourself," growled the other; and Bob recognized Haskett's voice.

The boy tried the door softly. Was there a possibility that he might slip away while they quarrelled? It yielded. He was outside, and running swiftly up the bank toward the road, when he heard their loud, angry voices culminating in the sounds of a scuffle. There was a splash — something had been thrown

into the water. Well, so much the better chance for him to escape, and he ran, head down, and elbows pressed close to his sides, straight up the road in the direction of the sycamore-tree. So running, and resting at intervals, he covered the three miles to the boundary of Strong's land. He passed across the dead-line, and made direct for the Twin Brothers.

He had last seen his mother in Mark Strong's arms. If she were dead, Mark Strong would tell him the truth. If she were living — it was characteristic of the effect Strong had on all those about him that the boy expected no less than justice, and hoped for no mercy from the little man in gray.

Meanwhile, all was silent back at the landing, where the boat-house door swung open; the little launch bumped at her moorings, and no man came to loosen the chain, nor send her down the river. And yet her owner had set out on a journey; Tulley Van Dorn was going, as he had often planned to go, down the river, and out toward the ocean. Perhaps he was set for as far a coast as that South American shore of which he had once spoken to the boy running, at this moment, hard up the hill toward Mark Strong's house.

Be that as it may, he and Haskett had gone together. The inferior criminal had uttered a word too much, pressed his advantage a little too far;

and Tulley Van Dorn's wild temper did the rest. There was a blow, a struggle, and the two men rolled, locked in each other's arms, into the river.

Twisting, fighting, strangling, clutching for each other's throats, they went down, rose again, and again sank. The current carried them into mid-stream, and, hampered each with the grasp of the other, neither could swim.

It was weeks before a ghastly something was found, a hundred miles down-stream, which made it possible for Tulley Van Dorn's widow to collect his insurance policies. The papers in the pockets told of that mysterious South American fund, which came like manna from heaven, to save the poor, robbed, crippled Gloriana to Celia and her little children.

Instead of a dreaded presence, a distressing reality, Van Dorn was henceforth to be in their lives a carefully respected memory — a conventional regret.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ONLY SON

It is a rare thing, but it does sometimes happen that a man makes a better nurse than any woman can. His strong, trained nerves, used to enduring the strain of business, the stress of danger and anxiety, sustain him here. A man's physical strength is in his favour also; and in Mark's case that resolution of soul that Julia should live and not die, added incalculably to his value.

As time went on, and the dense shadow over her receded a little, as it came to be that she was awake and asleep like other living people, and not merely a white, motionless, barely breathing shape, he began to plead his case with her, herself.

If she waked in the night she found him always at her bedside, his eyes upon her eyes, his hands holding hers. As intelligent recognition dawned in her look, he would press her hand softly, and say:

"You're better, aren't you, Julia? You are much stronger. You are getting well every hour."

Having gained her attention, however vague and feeble, he would go on :

“You must get well, you know. You must do it. You promised me that you would live, dear. You are mine, now — my wife. You daren’t go and leave me, Julia. I will not let you go. You are to stay — you are to live for me.”

And Julia the assenting, Julia the loyal, the loving, the docile, with her great eyes opened fully to his, seemed to respond, to obey, as a fragment of life — a bit of formless protoplasm — may obey its Creator. More and more every day, she lived. Even when she had seemed least conscious, nearest to the confines of Oblivion, her silent, motionless lips had never refused the nourishment which Mark held to them. She drank life, both figuratively and in the simple material sense, from his hand.

When two weeks were gone, though none could have said when any change took place, it was very plain to all that a change was there. And at the end of a month the ball had been extracted, there was no longer any fever, she was conscious much of the time, and clearly recognized those about her. A delicate tinge of colour had crept into her transparent cheeks. Her hand, when Mark lifted it, hung not so helpless in his grasp. The tide of life had turned; it was flowing back upon her.

From that time on the change was clearly perceptible day by day. Now, when Mark knelt by her pillow at night and whispered to her that she must live, must grow strong and well for him, she answered with a little half-whispered laugh, and obediently drifted into quiet sleep again. And a little later this tireless love, this unflagging courage and faith began to meet with reward due, as she turned her lips to his cheek, her eyes to his eyes, at these moments.

One night Strong was sitting by the bedside of his wife, who slept profoundly. The little ground-glass lamp on the table made a soft glow; it had rained earlier in the evening, and the sweet, fresh air came in through the open window. The man was glad of the coolness; all things in nature and the universe resolved themselves into factors in the recovery of the dear invalid. The change in temperature would do her good. He rearranged some small matters upon the stand, with that nicety of touch, that absolute deftness, which proclaims the perfect nurse.

Suddenly he smiled a little; the poplar-tree at the corner of the house was groaning softly against the window-sill; the wind must be rising. As if to confirm this, something struck lightly against the

screen; and then above the sound of the tree came a hoarse, boyish whisper :

“Mr. Strong! Mr. Strong! It’s me — Bob.”

Mark laid down the spoon in his hand; he would never have dropped it with a clatter, whatever happened. Stepping noiselessly to the window, he said, gently :

“Go down to the side door; I’ll let you in.”

As the boy swung himself from the porch roof to the ground those words were sweet in his ears, — “I’ll let you in.” It was not what he had expected.

In spite of them, Strong looked him over very sharply, as the two stood in the lighted side hall.

“You’ve broken jail,” he said, briefly.

Without offering any immediate reply or assent, the boy asked, with a painful, restrained eagerness :

“How is my mother? I know she’s living — if she hadn’t been, Van Dorn would never have taken the trouble to come to the Pen and tell me that she was dead; it would have been the truth.”

“Well, she’s living — and no thanks to you,” agreed Strong, in a voice whose lowered tone did not rob it of sternness. It was too much to ask of Mark to forget that this was the hand which had laid his poor Julia low, that had dealt to her such hours

of weakness and anguish, and well-nigh snuffed the light of joy out, in his own existence.

"No thanks to me," repeated Bob, humbly. "But I didn't shoot at her, nor at you. Van Dorn pretended to think that I'd fired the shot. He knew I didn't. I didn't get my gun in time to fire at anybody. But it was just a chance. I meant to shoot Van Dorn, and I might have missed him, and hit her. I'm not begging off."

Strong looked at the boy curiously. Nobody could see Robert Llewellyn and mistake him for a liar.

"See here, young man," he said, with some abatement of his sternness. "You've twice, that I know of, made an attempt on my life. Never mind explaining that it was a matter of principle, and you thought you were serving the ends of the Union," as Bob uttered a swift exclamation. "There it stands; you've twice attempted my life. What was I to think when your mother called your name, and threw herself between me and the bullet, but that it was your bullet? that you'd made the attempt the third time?"

The boy nodded. "Of course you would," he said, a little wistfully; "and she would, too."

Something in his contained bearing, in his refrain-

ing from all appeal, or demonstration, struck hopefully upon the elder man's mind.

"This is a pretty muddle, anyhow," the owner of the Twin Brothers began, not unkindly. "I —"

He broke off abruptly, turned his face so as to look up the lighted stairway, listened intently for an instant, and, seemingly satisfied with the unbroken stillness above-stairs, opened the dining-room door behind them.

"Come in here," he commanded, with a sort of cheerful brusqueness. "I must talk to you a little. I've been intending for a week to go over to the Pen and see what I could do about your release, and have a talk with you. But she's been in too critical a condition for me to leave her. This is the first night I've had the heart to think of anything but her."

Bob followed wonderingly.

"Is it somebody sick up-stairs?" he asked. "I thought I saw you —"

He broke off, and clung to the back of a chair, staring at the elder man with a face like ashes, as a thought flashed suddenly into his mind.

"I supposed you knew," answered Strong. "I thought of course that was why you came here to-night. Your mother and I were —"

"Wait!" interrupted the boy, and sat down.

He looked up with so piteous a countenance that Strong smiled a little.

"We were married the day after she was shot," he concluded. "I've been nursing her. She's had a hard fight of it, poor girl."

Bob caught at the kindly tone.

"Can I see her?" he asked, eagerly. "Is she out of danger, yet?"

"Yes, she's out of danger; but she's asleep now."

Strong smiled suddenly, and his face looked positively beautiful to the hungry eyes bent upon it.

"She's sleeping like a baby; and I wouldn't have her sleep disturbed for anybody or anything," he said, softly. "But if you'll follow me up without making a bit of noise, you can look into the room and see her."

The Captain was abed; they tiptoed past his door; Strong, reflecting that his champion and defender lay within, unconscious of these on-goings, confessed to a curious, whimsical sense of disloyalty in escorting Bob Llewellyn up-stairs.

The door was open, as Mark had left it, a faint glow of light pervaded the sickroom; and the two stole forward, breathing softly, and looked at the peaceful face on the pillow.

They stood a moment so; then Strong, turning to whisper to the boy, found that he was gone!

A sense of weary vexation swept over him. Then with a sigh he put the whole matter from him, picked up the spoon he had laid down to admit Robert, and measured out and administered the medicine which was due at this hour. As he put matters to rights upon the little medicine-stand, a small, muffled sound from the hall outside attracted his attention. He went softly to the stair head; and there upon the upper step sat Bob, his face in his hands, his broad shoulders shaking.

"I couldn't look at her," the boy said, in a poor, broken, choking voice. "They've been telling me for nearly two months that she was dead — and that I killed her. I wouldn't give down — to them; I held my head up before them. And then Colonel Harbury'd say I was an unnatural young scoundrel, and he'd be glad to cut the rope for my hanging!"

The next moment the bitterness melted out of the young voice, leaving only quivering pain.

"She looked so white," he whispered. "Is she going to get well?" and he gazed miserably up into Strong's face, his own frankly convulsed with a child's grief. After all, he was just a very wretched, frightened boy.

"I expect you're hungry," Strong suggested; and they both laughed a little, softly, together in the silence.

"I am," Bob admitted. "I haven't had anything to eat since morning. They only feed us twice a day, and Van Dorn came for me before we'd had supper."

And as they stole down-stairs together, Strong murmured, reassuringly :

"Of course she's going to get well. She's looked much worse than that."

He switched on the lights, and led the way to the refrigerator.

"I guess I can hunt you up something," he said. "We've had to live any way that we could here since the strike, and before your mother was brought home. I've got a girl from Chicago now; and I've warned the intelligence office to keep one on hand to take her place when she gets scared and leaves us. I think we've had three in a week sometimes; but there's generally something to eat."

As he spoke he was getting out milk and cold meat. He found crackers and bread somewhere else, and the boy sat down to eat, in that house which he had never expected to enter.

Strong sat perched lightly on the edge of the table, and watched his stepson make the first good meal he had had in many days. The owner of the Twin Brothers looked at the goodly proportions of this new member of his family, and was glad.

"Anyhow, he's had a chance to grow up; he's a fine specimen, physically," was the unspoken thought.

Then he noted some trick of manner, some motion of the head or hands, which was Julia's own; and his heart softened to the boy. Suddenly Bob's dark eyes flashed up into the quiet gray ones fixed so intently upon him.

"You think I'm a pretty bad lot, don't you, Mr. Strong?" he asked.

"I don't know," debated Strong, kindly; "your mother's son ought not to be that."

"I didn't mean that I was," returned Bob, with characteristic frankness; "I guessed that you'd think so."

He returned to his bread and meat, glancing up once or twice again, with surprise, to see how Strong laughed over this last remark.

"I expect if you let me be about any, and see my mother sometimes — and you'll have to do that — that you'll be wanting me to give up the Union," Bob hazarded.

"Well, if I did?"

"You might think I'd be glad to do that," the boy went on. "It's been the ruin of Uncle Owen — not the Union, but this strike has. I've never got anything but trouble and abuse out of belonging

to it. It scares me to hear the way Uncle Owen talks. If they turn him loose, he'll kill somebody. He'd think anything he did to the mine owners was justifiable. I don't know what's to become of men like that. Such things as go on in that Pen would make a good many men feel that way; and I don't know that they are responsible individuals to be punished — yet they are being punished — fearfully. But, Mr. Strong, I couldn't even give up the Union to please my mother, and I'd do more for her than for anybody living. She used to think almost as much of it as I did; but now she's married you," the son choked a little, then went on bravely, "now that she's your wife, a good many things will be different, of course."

"I hope so," said Strong, gently. "I hope that she has seen the worst of her trouble in this world — she'll never see any that I can keep off of her from this on. But I guess you don't understand how I feel about the Union. I always told the men that I would like to keep my membership, if it hadn't been made impossible by my becoming an employer. I'm as much interested in the success — the legitimate and proper success — of the Union, as you are, Bob."

The boy's eyes were fixed upon the face of his stepfather; their gaze was desperately eager; if

there was one grain of falsehood in this statement, Bob meant to know it.

"You turned 'em out of the Twin Brothers," he said at last.

"Bob," said Strong, leaning forward and bringing his near-sighted eyes closer to the young face, "you're just a boy; but I believe you can be made to understand this thing, where I haven't been able to make older men see it. What I did was to force the Union to take its own medicine, swallow it, and keep it down. Nobody else has ever done that. For that reason they've never learned what a strike really means, till they struck in the Twin Brothers. They said they'd take their men out of my mine. I let them go—and made them stay gone. I've stayed right here, ready to arbitrate, ready to talk to them, ready to pick up the negotiations exactly where they were dropped; and all the time I've been getting out more coal than any mine in my district, and making more money than I ever made before. Doing this, you understand, without any help from the Union. Do you see what I mean about making them take their own medicine?"

"You mean that if they say they're going to quit—like they do in a strike—the owners ought to make them quit," Bob said, thoughtfully.

The proposition appealed to his common sense.

Strong's objection to a strike that it was a bluff, a lie, instead of a plain business proposition, came back to his mind. He gnawed on the thing for a few moments, then put it by till he should be less engrossed with his own affairs.

"Then, even if I stay in the Union — and I'm going to — you'd let me come to see my mother — sometimes?"

Strong turned his back, under pretence of closing the cupboard doors.

"I guess you'd better talk to your mother herself, about that," he suggested. "I told you that I wanted her to be happy. I guess she thinks a good deal of you — I should if you were my boy. She'll want to see you, sometimes, and between times, likely enough."

If Bob had dared to believe it, he would have thought he saw the twinkle of Mark Strong's rare smile, in the fleeting glimpse the boy had of his step-father's side face. Certainly it was a very kindly voice that bade him:

"Go ahead, toward the stairs now, while I switch off the lights. I'm going to put you in the little room across from your mother's for to-night (I believe she'll be able to see you to-morrow. If she can, it'll surely do her a lot of good) and we'll go over, in the course of a day or two, and have

a talk with Harbury about you and your Uncle Owen."

But, as events shaped themselves, it was a week later that Mark drove over with the boy and Captain McClintock to Colonel Harbury's headquarters. Leaving the two in the buggy outside, he went in alone to have his talk with the militia colonel. Bob's affairs were readily arranged by Strong's becoming surety for the lad's appearance when wanted.

"Owen Llewellyn," repeated Colonel Harbury, in answer to Mark's inquiries concerning the older man. "The fellow's in the hospital. I feel uneasy about him, Mr. Strong. I wish they would take him at the State asylum, for I believe he is deranged; but I expect their doctors wouldn't see it that way."

Strong nodded. Harbury's small, handsome head, the typical head of the fighter, which may be seen topping the huge trunk and brawny neck of many a pugilist, was evidently getting an idea or two hammered into it.

"I'm glad to hear that he's in the hospital," said the visitor. "I'm glad to see that you are doing the best you can for him. I think the man is honest in his beliefs. He made a bitterer fight on me than he ever did on any mine owner in the district; and yet I never thought him a sneak — only a man with

wrong ideas of things. There were some personal reasons for his dislike of me, and I always gave him full credit for the belief that the Union was right, and that the justice of its cause would be its salvation."

Harbury looked thoughtfully down, and trifled with the paper-knife which he held in his hands.

"Mr. Strong," he began, in a low tone, "I served through the Spanish War. I don't believe anybody ever said I was a coward."

Strong smiled. It was his impression that if Harbury had been a little less of a fighter and a little more of a coward, matters would have gone better in the Iroquois district. The colonel perhaps misinterpreted Strong's mirth; he reddened and went on:

"I can fight men — soldiers — but I'll be hanged if I like fighting families, and it's what we've had to do here. The matter is all mixed up with women and children and neighbourhood affairs; the men are not soldiers; and if they do any fighting, it's some dirty work like the explosion at the Culleoka, or attacking some fellow that's on his way after a doctor for his child; and I'm — I'm sick of it. I believe the governor made a mistake when he sent us in here."

"It was Van Dorn's fault," said Strong.

The disappearance of the owner of the Gloriana

was freely talked about; and that ghastly something had not yet been stopped, down-stream, on its journey toward the ocean. Colonel Harbury raised a hand in evident dread of what the little man in gray might add.

“I ought to tell you, before you characterize poor Van Dorn’s action as perhaps it deserves,” he said, “that I am to marry his sister.”

So she was going to marry the middle-aged, commonplace, hardware merchant, who was a colonel of militia, and not even a man of means! Well, one might think that it could scarce be possible even to Jane Van Dorn’s hardihood and insensibility, and Celia’s long-suffering patience, for the house which had been Mrs. Van Dorn’s father’s, and was now the property of her and her children, to be the home of Tulley’s sister. And Jane was no longer young. She had taken what she could get; and Harbury was evidently moved by her condescension.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AFTERMATH

THE first day that Julia — Julia Strong — could come down-stairs, the old mare with the young gaits was hitched to a comfortable carriage and brought around for her to enjoy an outing.

The Captain watched Mark settling the wraps about his wife. He noted with satisfaction that deep inner light of joy which burned always steadily in the eyes of the little man in gray in these days. As they drove off he heard Strong laugh out suddenly, like a boy.

“Lord,” he said, shading his eyes to look after them, “I reckon I’ll have to get somebody else to listen to my goat stories and my folding bed yarns and such; Mark’s too happy to need any chirking up from me.”

He turned to the porch where Bob, who had assisted in the embarkation, still stood.

“Well, come on,” he called, cheerily, “I guess we two left-overs better go up to the mine. I want

to show you the practical workings of that thing before you leave for Chicago."

For Bob was to try what a course in a polytechnic would do for him.

"We'll just drive inside of our own land," Julia's husband suggested, gently, as they moved away.

"Let's go as far as the sycamore-tree, anyhow," Julia begged. "You can see the whole valley from there."

Strong chuckled, and glanced sidewise at his wife.

"Maybe that's just what I didn't want you to see," he suggested. "We have peace here, my dear. There may be a little war around the edges where the dead-line runs, and where the sentry marches; but we have peace at the core."

"Do you mean that they have war in the valley?" Julia asked, opening startled eyes upon her husband. "Did the militia stay?"

Julia's beauty had not waned during her illness; rather it had suffered a change, an apotheosis into something more ethereal, more perfect than her glowing loveliness of old. She was pale, and thin; but the light that shone from her countenance more than made up for the lack of colour and roundness. Strong looked at her with fond eyes.

"I expect I'd better tell you, before we get in

sight of the tents," he began, putting out a loving hand to clasp hers. "You know Van Dorn was bringing the militia in the night you were shot. The seven head towers were burned that night — just as you said they would be; and an attempt was made on the head tower and the washers at the Twin Brothers. Every mine in the Iroquois district — except the Twin Brothers — was put out of business for months by that night's work. Yes, the soldiers were kept here. You don't wonder at that, do you? It wasn't strange."

He searched her face with an eager yet reassuring gaze. That face was desperately anxious.

"There was something worse," she urged. "Tell me just what," she entreated. "It will do me less harm to know than to imagine all sorts of things."

"Well," Strong went on, rather reluctantly, and with a watchful eye upon his companion, "there was an explosion in the Culleoka."

"And lives were lost," supplied Julia, in a tone that was almost one of relief. She could feel sure that Bob was not concerned in anything which happened at the Culleoka that night.

Her husband nodded. "Sixteen non-Union miners were killed," he said. "There was no reason that the men should have been in the mine on the night of the Fourth. And now the operators assert

that their detectives have located the persons who lured them there, and that they have the guilty one in the Pen. Of course the Union is claiming that the operators procured the crime themselves, so that the strikers might be accused of it. You know how such things go."

Julia bent her head in assent — she did indeed know how such things went.

"Then there was the Gloriana," Strong went on. "Everybody was out of the mine, and there was no loss of life; but the fire made a clean sweep of the outside plant. The Black Diamond burned for nearly a week — new fires were set; its timbering caught, and the coal got to burning. The mine had to be flooded, before the fire could be stopped. The stockholders lost heavily."

Strong looked solicitously at his pale wife.

"Perhaps I had better not tell you any more, just now," he suggested, gently.

"Let me hear it all," Julia answered. "I've been guessing things almost as bad, when you wouldn't talk at all about the strike. You know, Mark, I've been through some dreadful times. This isn't new to me."

"Well, the governor is a great friend of Van Dorn's. Van Dorn had been up at the capital almost as much as he'd been in Iroquois. I don't

say that he influenced Aiken unduly, but I do say that if I were the chief executive of this State I wouldn't send troops to a locality which I had not personally investigated. I think it is only fair that the head of the commonwealth should, at least, hear both sides. I'm afraid Governor Aiken has only heard one, and that one Van Dorn's version. We have had State troops sent in here, till people who were not at first in sympathy with the strikers have gone over to them. And the last thing is that martial law has been declared in the Iroquois district."

Julia cried out softly; the matter was so much worse than she had expected.

"Where's Owen?" she asked, in a low voice.

"Well, Owen had it pretty hard," Strong said. "He was hurt that night when the boats collided, and the shooting took place. They arrested him the next day, and although he was not able to be moved, they carried him out to the stockade that they have in the hills back of the Gloriana. The men call it the Bull Pen. I guess they've got no decent accommodations for the sick out there. Some folks got together and represented this matter to the local authorities" (Strong did not tell his wife that he himself had been chief mover in this), "and Owen was taken out. But they got him back again, and

he's there yet. I don't think he'll ever be a well man again. I'm afraid his health is permanently broken. An effort is being made to get him into the State asylum. I really believe he belongs there."

He glanced covertly at Julia's face, and passed hastily from the particular and personal to the general. "They — the militia, I mean — searched houses, and insulted, browbeat, and mistreated the families of miners, till the feeling between troops and strikers is terribly exasperated; and, as I said, nearly all the public's sympathy has gone over to the men."

"Searched their houses — for what?" asked Julia, breathlessly.

"For arms and ammunition," Strong answered. "You see, when we have martial law, the people are not permitted to bear arms. I guess the militia have been impertinent in these matters — they usually are. They ripped out those little cabins like rats' nests, and they would quarrel with the wives and daughters of these men — treat them, in short, as though they were criminals. Then, if a man interfered, they marched him off to the Bull Pen."

"They have no legal right," began Julia, and there was no lack of colour in her cheeks now.

"They are their own law," her husband interrupted. "Martial law. We have learned, in this

State, that martial law is above the judiciary, and even above the will of the people which has created it. Oh, we have seen some strange times. They have taken lately to deporting the strikers — they carry them across the State line and fling them, like superfluous puppies or kittens, into some other commonwealth's back yard. Then the men crawl home, and the fight is all to do over again. Bob says they torture miners in the stockade there, to extract information. That seems hard to believe, for free America; but I guess Bob knows. The old charge is made here afresh, that the owners have procured crimes (arson, the destruction of property, in which lives were incidentally lost) that they might be laid at the door of the strikers."

At the mention of her son's name, the tears which had brimmed Julia Strong's eyes overflowed.

"Oh, it's awful—awful — awful!" she breathed.

"No, dear, it isn't," Strong reassured her. "It's just the working out of the inevitable law. Our Union miners took the sword, and the Book of Books is authority for stating that they shall perish by the sword. To put it more simply, if they hadn't announced their determination to strike, they wouldn't have been struck. You see, Julia, all the brutal lawlessness which the mine owners and the militia have used toward them — I don't deny that

the men have wrongs now; I call it brutal lawlessness; and it's done in the name of law, martial law, but it's only crime on a large scale — well, every crime that the owners have committed against the strikers is an echo and reflection of their own violence as planned against the employers.”

“No, no — you must not say that!” Julia remonstrated, leaning forward, her beautiful eyes alight with pity through their tears. “It isn’t fair. They never planned such dreadful things, unless — unless — *after* they struck.”

Strong smiled at the gentle feminine logic.

“They didn’t plan them till after they struck, eh? Well, dearest, you admit, when you say that, that a strike includes such schemes of violence. None of the men will deny that there has never been a great, wide-spread strike, which did not include arson, murder, and all sorts of secret and diabolical violence. They know that before they strike — and yet they strike.”

The carriage had skirted the hill now, and the camp was in full sight.

“That’s only part of the troops we have here,” Strong said, looking down at them with disfavour. “Poor old Joe Ackerman has been in that stockade twice. I went over and helped to get him out. He came near being pulled to pieces on the street one

day, because he struck one of their officers. I guess the old man was half-wild, and felt that he had provocation; anyhow, seven of those dough-boys got him pinned in between some cars at the station and pretty nearly clubbed him to death with their gun butts. They'd have killed him sure, if they had been where they could swing up their guns."

Julia shuddered.

"Let's drive around to the other side of the hill," she said, in a broken voice. "I can't tell, Mark, which one you think is right — the owners or the strikers."

Strong's arm went quickly around her, his eyes — those clear, steadfast eyes — looked into hers with deep tenderness; he drew her to him, kissing her delicate cheek.

"Being human, dear," he said, "they are both right, and both wrong. The owners have failed to keep some of their agreements with the men. The men have often failed to keep their agreements with their employers. But when that last and worst of arguments, the strike, was brought into use, such passions have been developed, and such murderous rage has been let loose between the two, that justice was lost sight of. It has been a war of reprisals and revenge. It has been that bitterest and most terrible of wars, a factional fight."

"And what's to come of it?" murmured Julia, looking up into his quiet face.

"What's to come of it?" he repeated. "Why, nothing but good. It's been a bitter lesson, but I firmly believe it is well taught. It must have been needed by both parties to the struggle, or it wouldn't have come. We're to have the commissioner of labour out here; and he'll investigate us, and tabulate us, and let the world at large know where the heavy balance of blame should rest. But my hearty and earnest belief is that such an outburst as this, at the time when the Mine Workers' Union includes as many men of intelligence as it does, will mean the end of striking to adjust labour difficulties. We may not have seen the last strike; there may be a few more; things in this world don't end abruptly; but I believe that our industrial affairs are ready to settle down to that more conservative pace which has proven successful elsewhere; I believe our difficulties will be arbitrated hereafter."

Julia's fond heart was bleeding for her poor people, friends of her youth, those whom she had helped through times of trouble, those who had given her the helping hand when she most needed it.

"I can't make it seem right," she said. "Those people were good folks; and I never saw anything dreadful in any of the owners of the mines — how

could such an evil thing as this grow up between them?"

The sunlight was gone from hill and valley for Julia Strong, and by and by she asked, sighingly, to be driven home.

Strong watched her with tender solicitude, yet half-amused; he knew that some plan was growing in her mind. It was not uttered till they were sitting alone in the parlour which had been prepared for the bride so many years before. Bob was still at the mine with Captain McClintock. Then she began:

"You must come around to the Union, Mark," she pleaded, with wet eyes. "Think what it's done for the men. It isn't every one that can lift himself out of the pit as you have; they need the Union to help them."

Strong shook his head smilingly.

"Come around to the Union?" he said. "Never! I say that because I don't need to come around. I think as well of the Union as you, dear girl, — and a long sight better than the people who believe it can be made an engine to lift a man up to ~~where~~ ^{where} he doesn't belong."

"Why, Mark!" And the dark eyes looked reproach. "I never expected to hear such a speech

as that from you. A man belongs as high as he can get — doesn't he? ”

“ Yes, love, but not as high as some outside force can sling him. The Union has worked for the eight-hour day — and got it. It has worked to make mine owners put in better ventilating apparatus — and it's triumphant. We've got State laws that we wouldn't have had, but for it. Every place the Union went to work at its own business, it's made a success of the thing — ”

“ Let them make a success of unionizing the Twin Brothers,” she urged. “ Take them back in the mine, Mark, dear, and show all these other cruel men that your heart is with those who toil for you. Put them to shame, by your generosity.”

“ And undo all the good I've done,” objected her husband, sturdily. “ Not I. Never — never while my head's hot. The Union can run its own business and succeed — it's a deadly failure when it attempts the business of Mark Strong. And don't you see, dear, that I'm the best thing that ever happened to it? I'm the best friend it ever had. These other owners are in such a position, they have so much to answer for, that the Union seems justified in striking on them or doing anything else to them. But I'm the only man in these United States that has held out against them, without aggressions or reprisals,

and that will hold out against them till they see the point."

She looked at him fondly, but her woman's wisdom was not stern enough to follow where he led. If the Union was a good thing, why not humour its whims? Thus she had brought up her boy. She said something of the sort, a little wistfully.

"Dearest," argued her husband, "it's a long sight bigger question than just the Miners' Union; it's the vast modern problem of labour and capital. Now let me put that so it will be plain to you. To my mind capital is the man, in this industrial world, and labour is the woman. For any productiveness, or the carrying on of our civilization, there must be a marriage of the two. This marriage always has been, and always will be; and, like many other good things, it has been degraded and abused. Capital, like a man, thinks it is the stronger, glories in its strength, and has robbed, oppressed, and beaten down its mate. Labour is really the great power of the industrial world, just as woman is the great power of the social and spiritual world, without whom the race must cease, but with whom it would go on if every man now living were stricken out of it. Just so, if all the accumulated money were dumped in the sea to-morrow, labour — not the

brain work of the capitalist, but the labour of the man who works with his hands — would replace it.”

Julia nodded.

“It’s a new way of putting it, but I see the point,” she said. “Of course I am looking to the wrongs that labour has suffered from capital, and women have borne from men — I’m the advocate of the oppressed.”

“And your oppressed classes are trying their prettiest to become the oppressor,” suggested her husband, genially. “You women are just beginning to find that you can take the world in your two hands and shake it till its teeth rattle; but would you — or it — or its teeth — be any better off for the performance? Labour is up to the same trick. When the labouring man was isolated, and his grievances were single, he depended upon the goodwill of his employer. Now, he has found what power there is in organization, and he is making his world over. It’s all right, for the women and the labour Unions, so long as they demand only their rights; but when they begin to infringe upon the rights of others, when they retain the position of one protected, fostered, and supported, whether the employer wants that particular individual or not,

and seek to add to their retention of this position, despotic conditions, why, they will, at least, run up against me."

She sat long musing, her eyes on the glowing coals.

"And you think the Twin Brothers will never be a Union mine again," she said, wistfully.

"No — no — no!" objected the man; "I think nothing of the sort. I want the Union — and I never wanted a thing right bad in my life, but I got it."

He came over and knelt beside his wife's chair, raising that small, homely face of his, which grew to be handsomer to those who loved him than mere animal beauty could have made it, and went on, with his arm laid lovingly about her waist.

"See, Jule, I say it is like husband and wife. Look at you and me; we're both human, and we both have faults; you shut me out once, and I took it as unkindly as some of these owners have been taking the strike of the Union; I acted the selfish, overbearing part."

She hushed his speech with a kiss.

"You are not to lay blame on my man," she said, softly.

"Well, I'll repeat, then, that we were both to

blame; and yet, because we needed each other, here you are in this chair by my fireside. Since you came back to me, I can hope for everything else."

THE END.



